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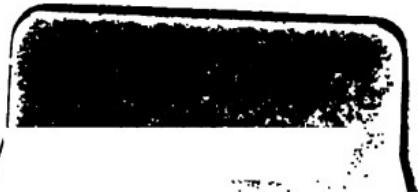
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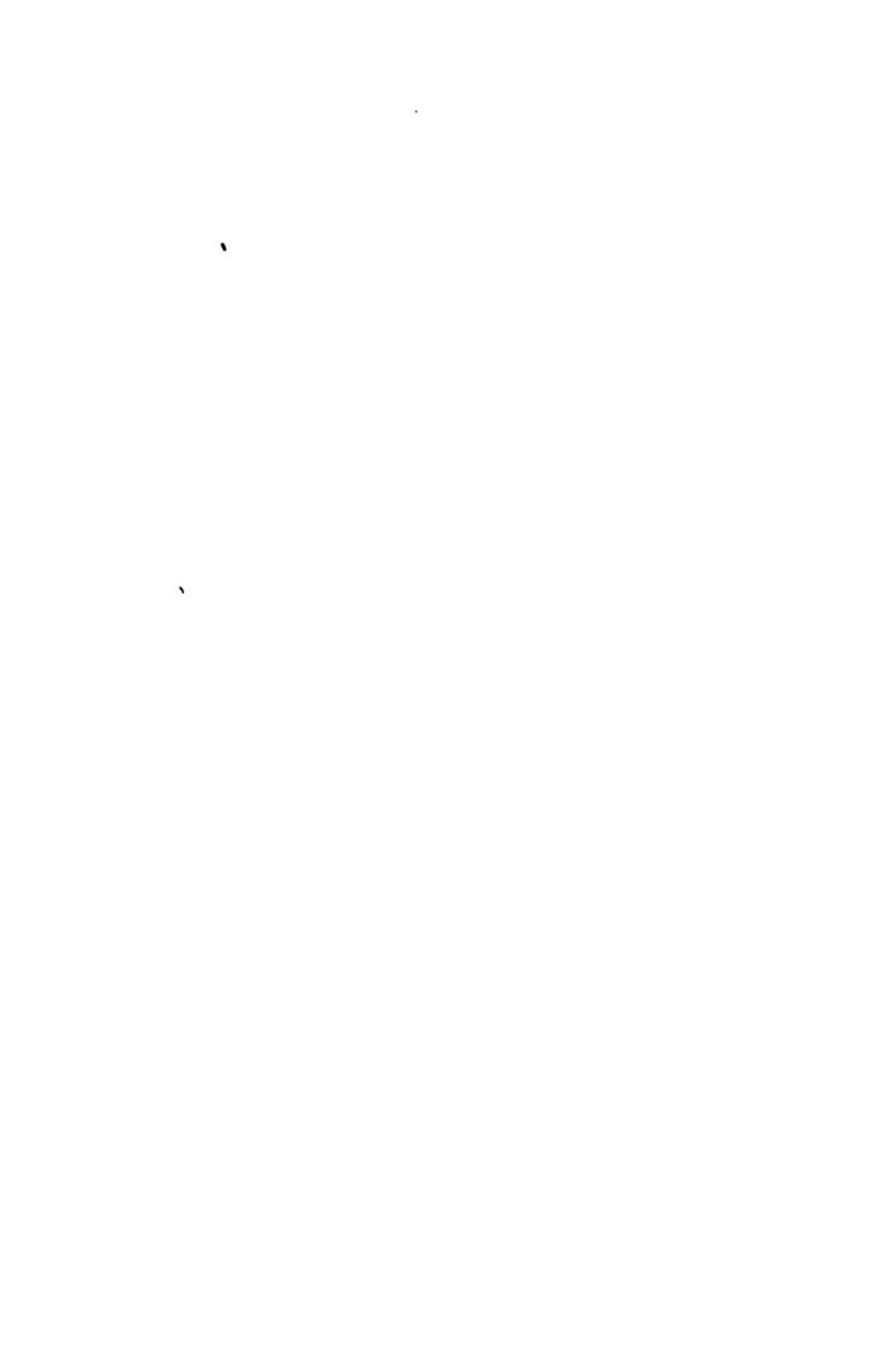


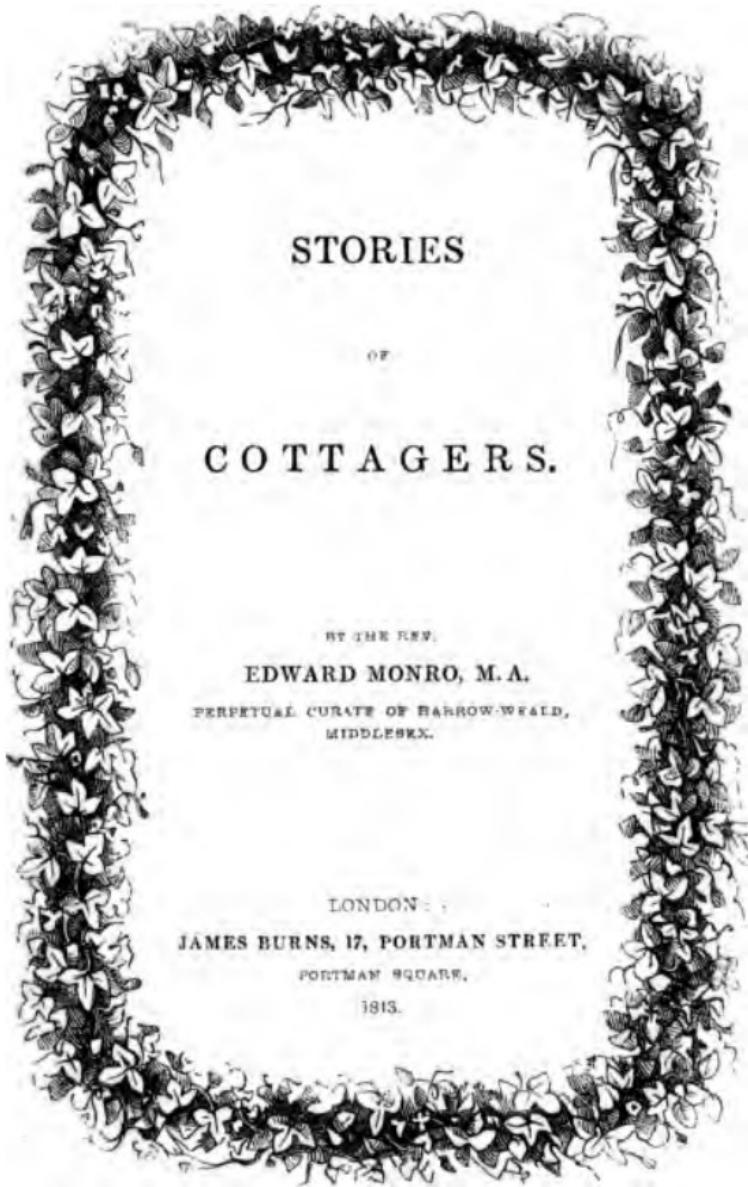
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STORIES

OF

COTTAGERS.

BY THE REV.

EDWARD MONRO, M.A.

PERPETUAL CURATE OF BARROW-WEALD,
MIDDLESEX.

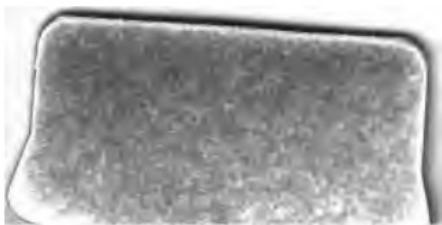
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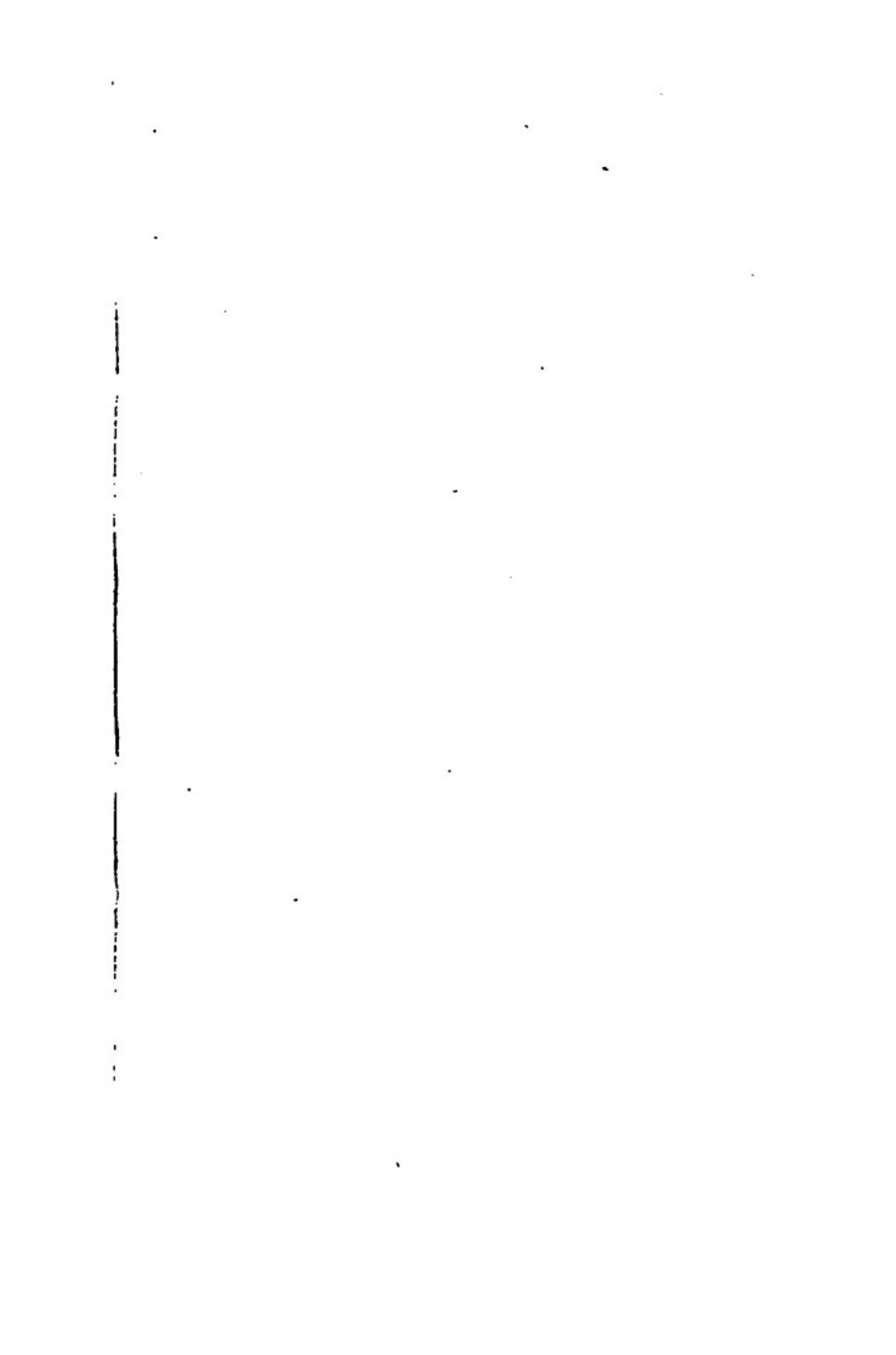
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1813.

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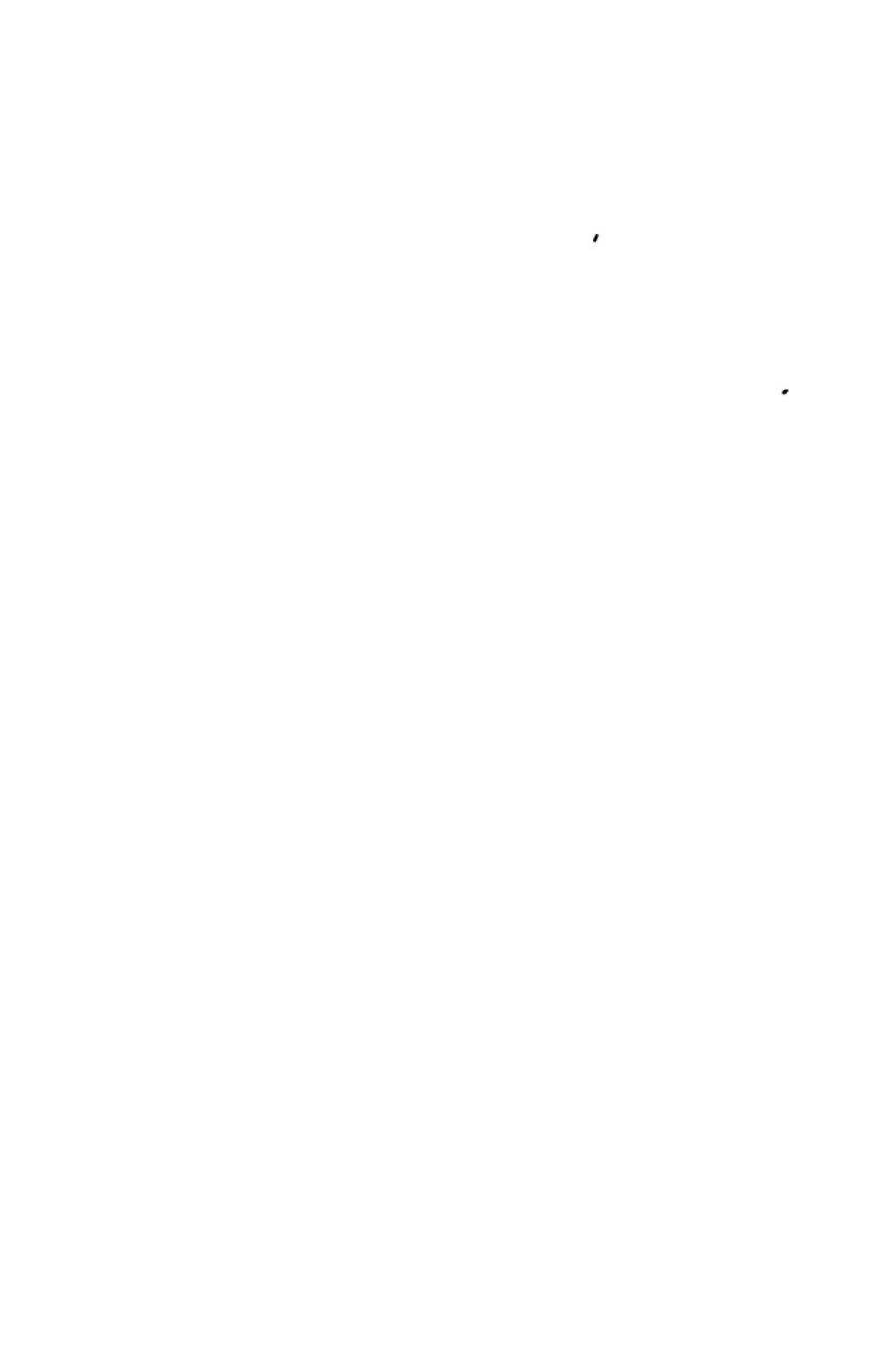


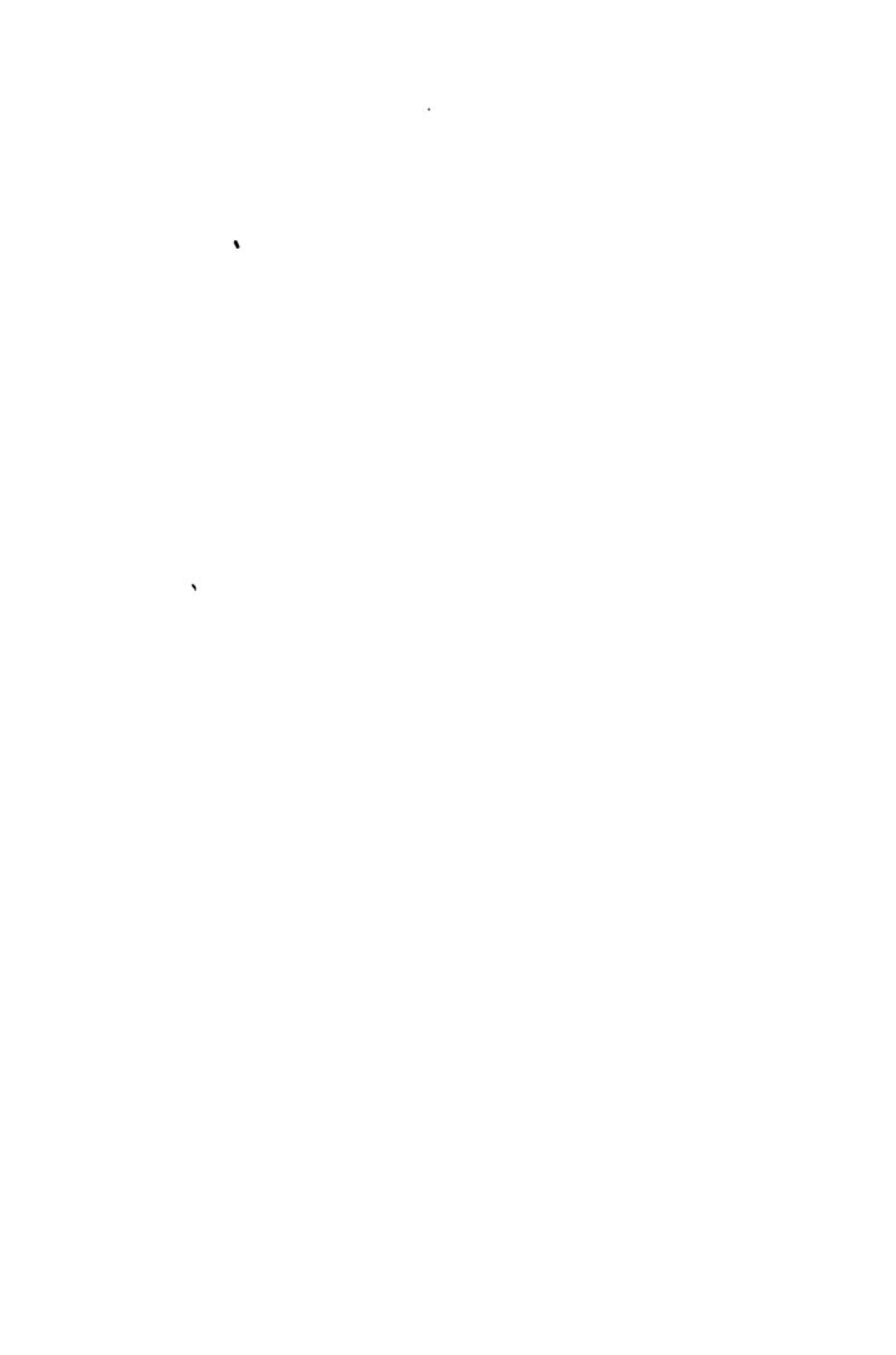


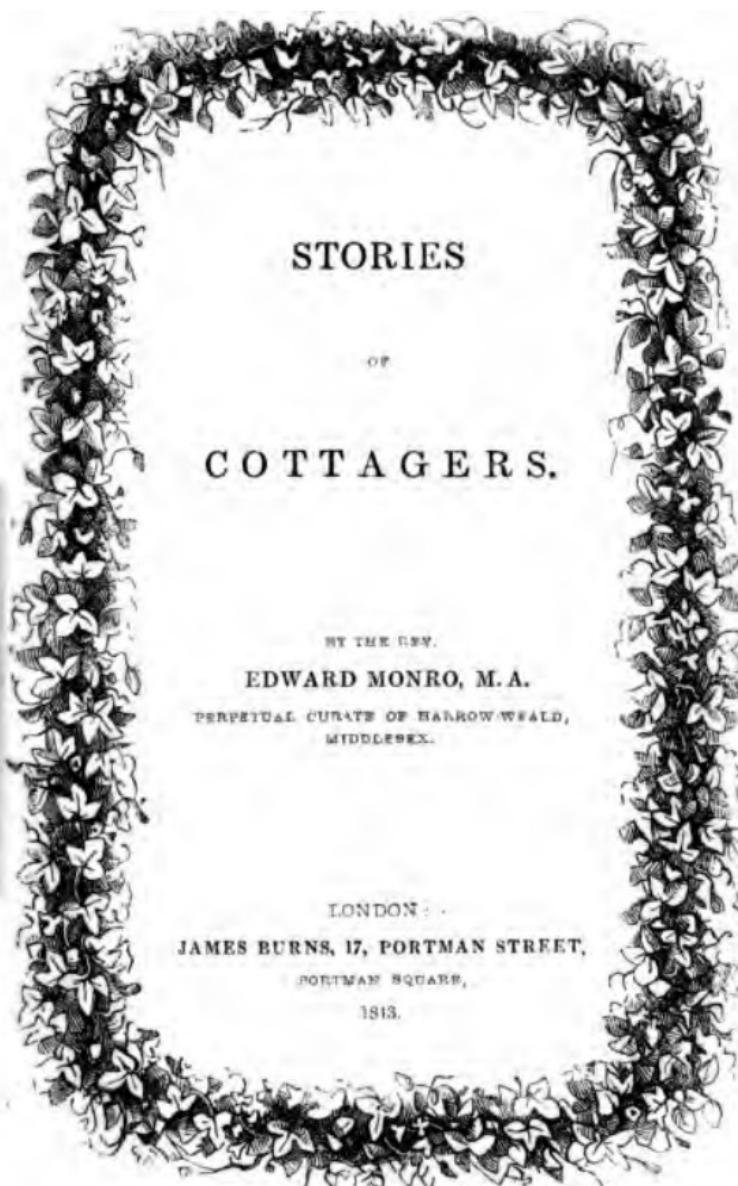




MARY COOPER.







STORIES

OF

COTTAGERS.

BY THE REV.

EDWARD MONRO, M.A.

PERPETUAL CURATE OF HARROW-WEALD,
MIDDLESEX.

LONDON:

JAMES BURNS, 17, PORTMAN STREET,

PORTMAN SQUARE,

1813.



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PREFACE.

THE following stories are of the common occurrences of life among the poor, and profess to be nothing more. It often seems to be forgotten that there are events in the lives of such persons which are of very much greater interest than the most highly wrought tales of fiction,—scenes which call forth the true, deep feelings of men, who, owing to circumstances, seldom express them, yet as truly possess them as many who make greater profession. We need not go far for what is interesting ; we have but to observe the working of human nature, and that in events which fall under our notice daily.

Again—these stories are intended to show that religion is to be applied to the matters of every day life. Some stories would lead men to think there can be no religion without the most highly-wrought feelings, and a degree of advancement, which really belongs but to few. Scenes of death, where the individuals are placed before us as enjoying the highest state of Christian peace, are made the common subjects of such tales. These narratives too often mislead, by inducing their readers to aim at such a condition of mind, without showing the way in which it is to be gained. So men fancy they have it, before they have taken one true step towards it; or else they despair because they have not attained it.

Again—such stories would often lead men to imagine that religion has much to do with feeling, but little with the common duties of life. They scarcely would teach that obedience to a parent—attention and respect to a husband—tender care of a wife—keeping contentedly in the station in which God has placed them, are essential parts of religion: so that where they are not, religion is not.

There are many degrees in men's conduct ; some are far more advanced in the work of holiness than others. The holy character of the servant of our crucified Lord is attained through a long process of resisted temptation, calmness under trials—obedience in little matters often unobserved by others—secret prayer and regular use of appointed means of grace—which take long, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to complete their work. How often, men, who are but little advanced in these things, yet are sincere in their purpose, are discouraged by those who profess to despise all that comes short of the highest degree of religious peace and hope,—a state which can only be gradually attained, and then in a path of quiet, steady obedience. I have tried to show this in the following stories.



True Stories of Cottagers.

ROBERT LEE.

LONDON :
R. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD STREET HILL.



ROBERT LEE.

Page 37.

TRUE

Stories of Cottagers.

ROBERT LEE.



LONDON :
JAMES BURNS, 17, PORTMAN STREET,
PORTMAN SQUARE.

1843.



Robert Lee.

RHERE was not a better looking lad in all the village than Robert Lee ; so all thought who saw him. He was tall and slim ; the expression of his face was very gentle, and his fair hair curled round his neck.

He was an only Son. His Parents lived in a cottage which stood alone in a lane, apart from the rest of the village. In that lane Robert spent his childhood : its high hedge-rows, and the young oaks which towered above them, with the blue-bells which trembled on the hillock beneath, formed almost his only idea of the world.

A few other children who lived in scattered cottages not far from the lane, were Robert's companions in his youthful games. But he liked to be alone, and would often wander by himself along the fields, and to amuse himself, when a little lad, would spend hours in building little huts of twigs under the hedge-banks. As a child he was very beautiful, and as a growing Boy

he had lost none of his good looks ; they rather increased, until at fifteen the neighbours used to wish their lads were half "as goodly as Mrs. Lee's Robert." He certainly was very striking for a calm, sweet expression of face, which among boys in his situation of life was unusual. At fifteen he was sent to work ; he always kept steadily at it. Through the summer evenings he would often join in the play of the children near the lane : they all liked him, and he was as a little king among them in all their games and disputes. I have often stood to watch their movements, and been delighted at their careless merriment, and been especially struck with the influence which, by universal consent, Robert Lee had gained over them all.

Each passing season knew the same little band of merry makers, their happy voices shouted in the early spring twilight ; the red glow of the summer sunset shone with its ruddy glory on their flaxen hair and sun-burnt faces ; the wet autumn leaves were raised into plaything houses, which the first night wind would whirl away. There were never new faces among the little group, and no old ones disappeared ; the only changes were when a Boy, by being old enough to go to work, wore an air of importance over *the rest*, or some little girl dragged out a

baby of a few weeks old to form part of their mimic game of life. Of this little party Robert was quite the king, and had been many a year. It mattered not whether his little subjects gathered on the bank of the small pond in the corner, or sat upon the field-gate, or were lying on the green margin of the lane, Robert was still the king, and without Robert nothing could go on. Each evening found them there. They knew each other well. I have often listened, with that sad sort of pleasure which distant sounds always give to their voices shouting in the distance, through the summer's evening. I loved to visit the lane with its inhabitants; it seemed to speak of something that was always the same. I often used to meet Robert on his way from work. He was a very timid Boy, and if I stopped him to ask him any question, he seemed glad to be let go to hide the blush which immediately came over his face, and would hasten his steps along the thick hedge towards the spot where his merry playfellows were gathering one by one from the different field paths, and hailed the appearance of Robert, when his figure was seen above the stile. "Here's Robert," our "good Robert."

So months flew away; season followed season, and it almost seemed as if change was not to come to the quiet inhabitants

of the village lane. It was shut out from the busy traffic of the high road. That was only known by the distant roll of wheels, which village children listen to with a degree of awe.

One evening the children had waited longer than usual for Robert's return from his work; the game did not go on well without him, and, tired of waiting, many of them had sat down to weave daisy chains on the harebell bank; some had loitered home, when a little fellow came panting with heat and speed down the lane, with news of their lost companion.

Robert's Father had died suddenly that evening. He had gone out well in the morning, but had been seized with a fit, and brought home in a cart: he had not lived two hours, and had never spoken since he was taken ill. In a moment every little laughing face was grave and sad, and many of them turned quickly towards Lee's cottage, to hear or see what they could.

On the Sunday after, Robert's Father was buried, and the poor Boy walked by the side of his widowed Mother behind the coffin. In the very lane of his happy evenings, he had now to walk after the kind friend of his boyhood, for a very kind Father had Robert's been to him. The little lane was full of *children*, who peeped out from behind the

bushes or their cottage doors, to see the funeral go by, and as it passed, joined in a straggling mob behind the mourners. Children soon change from gay to grave: they all felt saddened by the train of death; and many went all the way to the churchyard to see the coffin taken into the church.

It was a very sad evening to Robert and his Mother when they came home to their silent cottage.

"Oh, Sir," said Widow Lee, when I first saw her afterwards, "death does leave such a blank behind. I am always fancying I hear my old man talking to me from his chimney-corner. I can't fancy he's gone away. Robert's my only support now. God grant him a good boy to his poor Mother, for, oh, Sir, I wouldn't go to the House now in my old age,"—and the Widow fell on Robert's neck, and wept aloud.

"Mother, Mother, don't fret,—I'll be a good lad to you,—you shan't go to the House while I can work to save you."

And he did work for his Mother. Before morning dawned, and long after sunset, you might have seen the Widow's Son working hard for his Mother. The little party of the lane often missed their kind companion, and the game often flagged because he was not there. Sometimes he would walk home that way, and they would flock round him, and ask

him to stay a little, "just a little." But he never would; he gave his whole time in working for his Mother. When in doors he turned his hand to little works of carpentering, which his poor Father had taught him, by which he thought he might turn a penny. Many and many a long winter's evening you might have heard Robert's tools at work, while the Widow sat by her large hearth. Though the tears often stood in her eye as she thought of the past, she turned herself to her Son, and felt cheered and happy. Her house was clean and comfortable; every crevice and broken board in the walls were filled up by Robert's care to shelter his Mother from the winter's wind: and long after she had gone to bed, you might see across the dreary fields the pale light of the rushlight flickering through the leaden trellis-work of the cottage window, as Robert worked half the night by himself in the lower room.

So they spent the winter; and in the summer, on a Sunday morning, the Widow leant on Robert's arm as she walked along the lane to Church; and when they reached it, you might see her care-worn face by the side of the Boy's fresh countenance, in striking contrast. I used to like to watch them returning home along the roadside: they were long in reaching it, as the

Widow loved to linger in her walk, now by her husband's grave, and then by some bank on which she would rest, while Robert's slim figure would be by her side, gathering blackberries from the hedge, or weaving little nosegays of harebells and wild thyme for the village children, who were lingering in many a gossiping group along the deep shadow of the hedge-row; Robert Lee was still a favourite with them all, and still would stay long after his Mother had settled herself at her cottage door, to amuse the children with whom he used to play, or help the little-ones to reach the boughs of hazel-nuts.

Robert seemed really governed by good principle in all he did: he had been early taught to learn that his first duty towards man was to obey and cherish his Mother; and no fault would have seemed much worse to him than staying away from her, to amuse himself with companions of his own age, who were, too often, but gaily dressed idlers through the holy hours of Sunday. In the evening Robert would sit and read to his Mother by her door till she was tired, and then he would try to amuse her in some other way.

It was on a Sunday at the end of July, a very hot day, and I had loitered on my way from Church to enjoy the stillness of the heated air, when I saw the figure of a woman

sitting by a grave in the church-yard. I soon saw it was Widow Lee by her husband's grave: it was a place she often went to, so I did not think it strange; but I was surprised to see her alone, without her ever watchful attendant. I asked her where Robert was; she gave a faint sigh, and told "me he had been out ever since church, and "would soon be back." I was sure there was something on her mind, and pressed her to tell me. "Ah, Sir," said she "my old "heart often bodes ill where no ill is, but "I'm so used to my Boy being with me at this "hour, that I don't like his being away, yet "he'll soon be back, he's gone with some young "friends for a walk to see the recruiting "party." I noticed a shudder cross over her frame as she uttered the last words, "Recruit- "ing party." I said "I did not know there "was one in the village."—"Ah, yes, Sir, "and more's the pity, many a hale young "lad have they entrapped ere this; I've "seen 'em walk out of their native home, "looking as brave and bonny like—but oh! "Sir, I've known the heavy heart they had "beneath; and how different they've looked "when they came back again, a few years "after; and if my Robert should ever go, "oh, wouldn't it break my poor heart?" "Your Robert go," I said, "surely you have "no reason to think of his having such an

"idea."—"Not for worlds would I say he
"has, he's a dear, kind lad to me: but when
"he was quite young, he used to talk of
"going a soldiering; and there is no telling
"what the talk of others, and the sight of a
"red coat may do to a Boy of his age."—
"But, surely, Robert has too much sense of
"his duty to God, who has told us to honour
"our Mother, and taught us by His example,
"to cherish her in her advancing age." "Oh,
"yes, yes, Sir, very true, it was only my foolish
"mind which turned over sad thoughts—I
"don't know why—I've no reason;" and the
Widow turned away, and I saw her tears
were dropping fast upon her husband's grave;
seeing Robert coming through the gate, I
walked away.

I began to fear that Widow Lee might have some further reason than she confessed for what she feared; but still it seemed impossible. A few days after, I met Robert coming back from his day's work, and stopped him. I led the conversation to the subject of the recruits, and spoke very strongly on the duty of a Son not being led away by any foolish motive to leave a Parent, and that, when a Parent expressed a decided wish against a Son taking any such course, it was quite a Son's duty to obey. He listened attentively, and went home. His Mother told me, afterwards, he sat a long

time silent in the house, and at last, rising up, threw his arms round her neck : “ Mother, dear Mother, nothing shall make “ me leave you, not all the Soldiers in the “ world.”—Never did the Widow feel to love those deep blue eyes so much before, never stroked his fair curling hair over his head with so much pleasure, as she said, “ No, “ my Boy, I thought that you would not “ leave me in my old age.”

Time went on, and the Widow’s sorrows wore away by her Son’s tender care. Whenever I spoke to him, I found him an open, candid Boy, and willing to receive advice.

Three months had gone since the conversation mentioned above, and summer had passed into autumn; another recruiting party entered the village ; it was a time when there was a great want of Soldiers for foreign lands. I had been visiting in the parish late in the evening, and was returning home in the dusk, when I met a little girl running at full speed up the field-path : “ Oh, Sir, Sir,” said “ she, “ please go down to Widow Lee, “ for Robert’s gone with the Soldiers, and “ the Widow’s like a mad thing.”—“ Gone “ with the Soldiers ! impossible, utterly im- “ possible !” Such was my feeling and remark as I hastened to the cottage.

The door stood open ; a rushlight with a long wick stood on the table ; a little

fire still smouldered in the embers : the poor mother was sitting in her old easy chair, rocking herself backward and forward with her face buried in her hands. Robert's Sunday coat lay on the table—she had been mending it for next day's wear—his other clothes were airing by the fire—the room was full of *his* things,—he was his Mother's one only thought : “ And he's gone ; oh ! he's “ gone, Sir, my own poor boy.” From her agony of grief, I could gather nothing more. A woman came to the door, who had just been down the village to hear what tidings she could. Her tale was sad ; it seemed that Robert Lee had gone off early in the morning with two or three youths from the village, and they were now far away from home ; the Widow had only heard of it half an hour before I entered. It was most touching to see his things lying about the room ; everything speaking of him, and so showing his mother's tender care of all belonging to “ *her Robert.* ” “ There they are, there they “ are, all ready for Sunday, my Robert's “ things, and I shall be all, all alone ; ” sorrow seemed to choke her words, and she fell back in her chair. It was hard to know what to say to comfort her. “ Oh, Sir,” she “ said, “ to think of *his* leaving me, I never “ thought he could ; when other lads have “ left their home to go a soldiering, I always

" said—My Robert, he won't go—But he
" *is* gone, and where shall I go?"

Many and many a dreary winter's night did Widow Lee sit alone by her cheerless fire-side; she never cared to make it bright now; the same heap lay under it, burnt out over and over again; she hadn't the heart "to make things look tidy now." She did nothing but sit and rock backwards and forwards for hours together. Often she would walk to her door, and listen, thinking she might hear Robert's step along the old field-path, as if she should wake from a dream, and when he didn't come, she went back, so disappointed!—Often she would listen to the winter's wind, which howled among the trees of the copse on the hill-top; she thought she might hear his whistle above it all, as she used to hear it, when Robert came back to his home; but no! he never came.

Though each evening she half thought he would come before night, she always spent the night alone; the house seemed so silent; she used to lie and long to hear the sounds of his movements underneath, while employed half the night with his work for her. The stillness seemed awful to her. She heard nothing of him—he never wrote to her—nothing happened to explain his most *unexpected* conduct. Neighbours have told

me, that every Saturday night, Robert's Sunday clothes were brought down stairs, looked over, and put to rights, as if for to-morrow's wear; and that the Widow's spectacles were always put on, to see each little hole there might be, but there were few, and she found it one week as she left it the last: she liked to have them out; the room was always filled with his things, though he was not there to use them. She would say, "His "dear Sunday coat looks like himself, as it "lies before me." She did not come to Church for some time after he was gone; she said it punished her so, to see the neighbours with all their Boys about 'em, and she had lost her bonny lad who used to walk so kind with her. "But oh, Sir, I was too proud of him, and so "he was taken for a punishment." She did come once or twice to Church. I remember seeing the poor Widow's care-worn face and tearful eyes, as she sat alone in the corner of the Church where they always used to sit; and then I used to see her red cloak as it passed along under the Church wall, as she tottered on her stick, to pay her Sunday visit to her husband's grave; then she would get home as she could, as if she were half ashamed, under the hedge-side.

I often pressed upon her the duty of bearing her Trial as a Chastisement from God, to teach her in her old age to look into her

faults which were uncorrected. She always saw the truth of what I said, but seemed soon to relapse into her usual indifference. She fretted so at not hearing from him; it was indeed strange; in fact, nothing had been more unaccountable from the first, than his whole conduct. There was scarcely one in the village a greater object of pity than the Widow Lee; yet under our deepest Sorrows, God has promised His "Grace sufficient" for our day; and if we will use the Means He has given us to gain that Grace, we shall be supported through all.

The season grew very cold, and she had so small a pittance from the parish, that she could not support herself with it. The little fire she had, was not enough to keep her old limbs warm; her scanty food was not enough to support her weakened frame. The furniture grew more and more crazy, she did not care to keep it in any order. She made one effort to get more relief from the House; she went herself, but it was in vain; they told her "she had no ties, and was just a case to "come into the House." "I could well have "borne, Sir, to be told to come into the "House, for I sometimes think one place is "as good as another to me, I've no interest "left; but when they said I'd *no tie*, it did "so cut me; I thought I had one once, and "ought to have one now. Oh, I so often

"wonder where he is; there's never a cold
"wind at night, but what I pray for him."
So she would ramble on about her Son.

The day was fixed for her to go into the House; her little furniture was to be sold by the landlord to pay her rent, as she had not been able to pay it for many weeks. I went down to her house on the day, thinking I might be of some use to her. The room was full of people, the old cracked furniture piled in the middle of the room, all her broken crockery was heaped upon it; things which she valued, but worth nothing; there was her cup and saucer, and Robert's too—the one she bought for him when he was quite young, a little bigger than her own: he always used it, and she had always put it out by the side of her own, when she sat down to her solitary tea; his name was on it in painted letters; she washed and put it away, though it was never used—that was sold, the Widow saw it go—I saw her eye upon it, as she sat cold and unnoticed in the chimney-corner; the whole set, Robert's and all, went for a shilling. I noticed her feeling in her ragged pocket as if she expected to find a shilling there; but there had not been as much as that, many a day: and she hid her face in her hand; I heard her mutter to herself, "a shilling, only a shilling, —my boy's cup." Her little black bonnet and red cloak drawn close round her, her old

oak stick by her side, herself sitting in her chimney corner—the utter neglect with which the busy crowd treated her, who looked with an eye of such love on each little object which they bought for a trifle—the agony she must have felt at seeing things she so loved treated with such carelessness—all seemed to paint the very picture of sorrow. She heard me come in, and looked up; she looked at me, and as I approached her, she said, “Oh, Sir, “just his Sunday coat: don’t let *that* go, “you’ve often been my friend.” Of course the Sunday coat was bought, and she caught hold of it with a degree of delight which was more like madness. I bought the cup for her too. She seemed satisfied, and folding it closely up, rose, as if to go, but hesitated. I saw her eye look up quickly to the auctioneer—he was selling her son’s linnet, and its sad plaintive cry had struck on her ear; it was in a little cage he made himself; she looked at me as if she hardly liked to ask so much; the bird was, of course, bought.

The sale was over—everything bought and gone—the poor damp room was utterly empty and bare. There was one little wooden stool on which the Widow sat; the bird sung its sad tale in the window, and the winter weather beat against the door: she got up, and unfolding the coat, fastened it on the door peg.—“It

always did hang there, and it shall to the last that I stay here," said she. I tried to compose her, and read the Bible; she seemed calmed, and more willing to resign herself to God's Will. I stayed till the cart came to take her away.—With an aching heart and a steady step, Widow Lee again folded up the coat, and, taking up the little bird, cast a last look on the cottage that *was* her's, and went alone to the Union. Oh, that youths would remember what agony they bring on parents by neglecting them in their old age!

I saw her soon after she went to the Union. She was in the Woman's Ward. She was sitting by herself in the corner of the room. No one seemed to be taking any notice of her. She wore her little black bonnet as she used to do, and her hands were leaning on her old oak-stick. I asked the master a few questions about her; he said "she was a quiet old " pauper enough;—he had not had occasion " to use Prison discipline for her;—she had " some odd fancies, and he thought she was " not as sharp as she might be. She always " went muttering on about some Robert, " and used to make a great fuss about a " little mug she brought with her, which he " had thrown away, because it was a shame " one pauper should have their own property " more than another, it only caused jealousy; " and bless me, what a dust she made about

“ that old mug ; if the old woman didn’t
“ rout about all day with her stick in the
“ dunghill, till she found the bit which had
“ *Robert’s name* on it, and then she was like
“ a mad thing, and hugged up the broken bit
“ in her bosom ; she’s full of odd fancies, but
“ so as she’s quiet, and conforms to rules, we
“ shan’t fall out ; there are many worse than
“ her.” So spoke the union-master of the
desolate old Widow ;—Her whom God careth
for and protecteth. Oh, how little did he
know the love she felt for that little broken
crockery,—how little did he know of the
aching heart that was hidden beneath that
workhouse dress of the old “ pauper ” in the
corner. How little do such think, very
often, that those who by Age and Poverty
are driven within those walls, have feelings
which they will not utter, and religious prin-
ciples as strongly as others. The Poor, with
feelings and a mind given them by God, are
often herded together as though they were
but Animals to be kept alive, instead of
Beings whose social ties and religious em-
otions are as important as those of the great
and honoured ;—Beings, whose humble, holy
lot in life, He took on Himself, who became
“ poor to make many rich.”

In a town in the north, a regiment of
soldiers had been quartered some months.
The barracks were in the old castle, which

stood on a high hill above the rest of the town. The Minister of the parish had been suddenly called one morning to come and see a dying Soldier in the barracks, whose death was fast approaching from the effects of drinking and dissolute conduct. The Minister went immediately to the dying man. He was led into a long, low barrack room ; down the sides were the Soldiers' beds, and a box by each of them. A small fire was on the opposite side : there was one window which looked out into a dull court-yard, about which a few men were moving, employed at different works. A few things lay in disorder about the floor, soldiers' jackets, or cloaks, or feathers, all betokening the idle indifference of a regiment quartered in a town in time of peace. The day was foggy, which gave an air of still greater dulness to the whole. A few stragglers were loitering round a fire in their undress uniform.

As the Clergyman passed, he was struck for the moment by one of the group, who was leaning his head on his hand against the wall, over the fire-place. He was a tall slender youth, whose well-made form was the more conspicuous from the slight undress uniform he wore. His face was scarcely sufficiently turned round for the Minister to see, but his attention was drawn towards

him by the fact of his being the only one who pulled off his cap as he entered, and from his not observing the air of dogged insolence and indifference with which the other men received the visit of the Minister of God. They stared when he entered, and continued smoking and talking as they were doing before he came in. The sick man lay at the end of the room: he was evidently in a violent fever, and the medical man had given up all hopes of his life. He was an ill-looking man of about forty, and seemed in a most unprepared state of mind for the awful change which was coming on him; indeed, when the Priest entered, he was swearing at the man who was trying to support him in his bed. The Priest spoke to him in a solemn manner on the dreadful death of those who go unprepared to Judgment—he spoke aloud that the rest might hear;—he reminded him how terrible must be their feelings who would rise from death as from a sleep, and whose first thought in rising on that awful Morning would be, that the last thing they remembered of life was Sin and Impenitence. The man listened to what was said, and then turned away. “Oh, don’t “talk to me,” said he, “I’m lost—I’m lost—“there’s no hope.” “There is hope,” rejoined the Minister, “if you can repent, and “through Penitence turn to that Saviour

" who died for Sinners." " *I* repent?" said the dying man, " *I*, who once knew what " was right, and have now spent thirty years " in open sin,—*I* repent in the few last " hours? *I can't* repent." " With God all " things are possible," was the answer. " Pray " to Him for grace to repent." The dying man gave a look of hideous horror at the Clergyman, and sunk back with a groan. The Minister had spoken as much for the living as the dying, for he did tremble to see how a life of sin and of quenching Conscience had hardened his heart against Hope. As he was speaking, a faint sigh broke from one of those who were standing by the fire-side. It was from the youth I spoke of; he had hitherto been standing among the rest, leaning his head upon his hand against the wall; his face was now turned round; his blue eye was filled with tears which were rolling down fast upon his arm; he tried to brush them off, but they would come; his figure was slender, and of a more gentle form than you usually see among Soldiers of his rank. There was something striking about his appearance and manner; for a moment he seemed absorbed in thought, and watched the Clergyman with a sorrowful look, which seemed to express a feeling amounting to agony; he seemed to hesitate as if he would stay behind; the other men turned round to leave the room,

he turned too.—“ How now, Bob ! methodizing again,” said a man near him : the colour rushed to the Boy’s face, and for a moment he seemed inclined to linger behind, but his courage failed, and he slunk timidly away. The Priest watched the youth as he left the room, and as he descended the staircase—“ That’s a fine Boy,” said an old Soldier, standing near, “ it’s a pity he should “ be so spoilt among that set there. I know “ he has better feelings than he shows ; he’s “ a fine bold lad. I’ve seen that Boy, Sir, “ stand out as bold for what he thought “ right, aye, Sir, as bold—But he has almost “ given in to them now.” The Clergyman becoming more interested in the Boy, questioned the old Soldier about him. “ I remember, “ Sir,” said the old Soldier, “ soon after that “ lad had joined the regiment, watching him “ kneel down and say his prayers night and “ morning, till they laughed him out of it ; “ and I’ve seen him, Sir, steal his Bible out “ from under his pillow, when all were asleep “ in the barrack room, and he would read it, “ Sir, by the moonlight ; and I’ve seen his “ face by the light as he leant up in bed. I’ve “ often seen the tears drop one by one upon “ the Book. Yes, Sir, *that* I have, and what’s “ more, I’ve laid and cried too, for his face “ did look so nice like, as the poor lad cried, and “ I’ve said ‘there’s more in slim Bob, as they

“ ‘call him, than appears ;’ and, if you an’t
“ tired of my story—I remember on one
“ fine summer’s evening, when I was walking
“ alone along the fields, I heard voices read-
“ ing, and I thought it odd, and went up to
“ where the sound came from, and there I
“ found him, Sir, sitting under a tree in a
“ field, reading aloud by himself ; and when
“ he saw me, the poor lad started and shut
“ his book ; and says I, ‘Why start, my Boy ?
“ I shan’t hurt you ; never be ashamed of
“ doing right, Bob,—good men don’t start.’
“ I told him I wished he wouldn’t go with
“ them bad ones,—(for he’s a favourite, Sir,
“ with ’em all.) Well, and then says I,
“ Maybe you’ve some Parent away off as
“ taught you to read, so go on doing as they
“ told you ; and I saw him turn away and
“ cry—the colour came to his face—we
“ walked home together, and tho’ he didn’t
“ say much, I’ve always thought he looked
“ on me as his friend since. But I’m afraid
“ he’s lost many of those ways. I don’t see
“ him say his Prayers now, or read either :
“ and then they’ve got him to go out with
“ ’em on one of their mad frolics to-night to
“ have a drinking bout at the Blue Boar.
“ I told him not to go ; I know he doesn’t
“ want: some ill will come of it, that’s as
“ I think, however.”

Listening to these rambling remarks about

the Boy, the Minister watched his figure as he crossed the court-yard. There was something about his whole manner and form which had struck him with an unusual interest, and he fully joined in the regret expressed by the Soldier at his evil companions with whom he lived.

It was early in the next morning that a messenger came to him from the barracks, begging him to come immediately to see a youth who was not expected to live. He had met with a severe accident that night from a fall, which he had had in company with some companions who had been engaged in a drunken frolic. "I went to the barrack-room," to use the Minister's own words, "the same in which I was yesterday, and on entering, saw in a bed in the corner the very Boy I had felt so interested in before. The room was dark, and a few men were loitering about it, occupied in various works. The Boy was lying upon a pillow which propped up his head; the light from the small narrow window fell upon his face, which looked deadly pale; the same eye I had been so struck with yesterday, was now gazing with a look of deep anxiety upon the door through which he expected me. His neck lay bare to give a greater ease to his breathing. His box was by his bed-

“ side, with his sword and hat, and a little
“ Bible which the Soldier had been reading to
“ him. Poor Boy ! it will be long before
“ I forget the quick anxious manner with
“ which he held out his hand to me. ‘ Oh,
“ Sir, I’m dying, and I want to speak to
“ you.’ There was a look of unspeakable
“ sorrow in his face as he spoke, and equally
“ so in the manner in which he held my hand.
“ ‘ Oh, Sir, Sir, I know I’m dying, and I’ve
“ so very much to ask you. You don’t *know*
“ how much,’ and the tears started from the
“ poor lad’s eye. ‘ I’ve been so bad—so very
“ bad, and now I’m going. I heard you
“ speak to Jack Morris yesterday, I little
“ thought how soon I should be as near gone
“ as he. I was half determined then not to
“ go out on their mad scheme, but they
“ laughed at me, so I went, and here’s what’s
“ come of it.’ He seemed too much over-
“ come to speak more ; he sunk back quite
“ exhausted; there was a pause for a moment;
“ when he again began,—‘ I have a Mother,
“ Sir ! poor old Mother ! Oh, Sir, I’ve been
“ so bad to her ; I left her months ago to be
“ a Soldier, and I never let her know where
“ I was, and I’ve never heard of her since,
“ and I did tell her I’d never leave her, and
“ I did leave her after all ; and, Sir, I can’t
“ die without seeing her, so do send for her,
“ please do ; and here’s all my little savings

“ to pay the journey,’ said he, drawing from
“ under his pillow a little bag of money.
“ did save it for her, so pray do send it her
“ and tell her how sorry I was. But now,
“ oh, perhaps, I shan’t ever see poor Mother
“ again !’ The colour rushed to his cheek,
“ and he burst into tears. The old Soldier
“ who was standing by, brushed away a tear,
“ for it was a very sad scene. I asked him
“ what had ever made him leave his Mother,
“ since she seemed so dependant on him. He
“ told me he scarcely knew ; he hardly meant
“ it the day he went ; but he had indulged a
“ wish to go, and had listened to the advice
“ of some bad youths who urged him to go,
“ —he never meant it at the time ; but wish-
“ ing to do what was wrong, had led him on
“ to do it. It was a sad tale ; a tale of sorrow,
“ brought on by not at once shutting his
“ mind against a wrong Wish, and at once
“ determining to follow a Mother’s desire. It
“ was, indeed, a punishment of a disobedient
“ Son. ‘I hardly thought at the time that it was
“ disobeying her. I never thought of it till
“ I was far away from home, and then, Sir, oh,
“ it did come on me with such a feeling. But
“ then it was too late ; then I was listed, and
“ they only laughed at me when I talked of
“ going back. Oh, when I thought of poor old
“ Mother sitting alone in that cottage where
“ I used to be with her, and thought of her

" all the dreary winters' nights, and gone
" perhaps to the House, and that all because
" of me; oh, Sir, I thought I should have
" died outright. But I *could not* write to
" her, I was so ashamed; and I thought I
" should get leave and go to her, and so
" I put off and put off, and now it's come to
" this. I did love this little money bag so,
" because I called it 'Mother's,' and that used
" to make me think less badly of myself,
" when I thought I was saving up all to take
" to her. I can't tell you what wretched
" days I've had, and then I felt I was so
" sinning against God, Him as she used to
" teach me to pray to and serve. I knew
" He was angry with me for leaving her,
" and so I felt as if I couldn't pray—and
" now you know the worst, Sir. I've been
" a bad, bad Boy; do tell me what to do, and
" send for poor old Mother to come and see
" me before I die.' Of course I promised
" to do all he asked me. I saw his poor feeble
" frame was quite exhausted by what he said.
" The poor Boy was worse that night.

" The old Soldier who waited on him told
" me he went on so about his Mother while he
" wandered in fever. ' It was all his Mother,
" Sir, his poor old Mother, when 'she would
" come ;' and then he thought she was by him,
" and he began to beg her pardon, and then he
" would talk to her as if he was sitting by

“ her own cottage door. It’s unked *wOrk*,
“ Sir, to see the poor lad so fashed about *his*
“ Mother.’

“ I saw him early in the morning. When
“ he heard me come, he started up and
“ flung aside the curtain. His eyes were
“ fixed a moment in vacancy, as if looking
“ for something he did not see, and then he
“ sunk back disappointed on his pillow. I told
“ him I had sent for his Mother, and sent the
“ little note he had written to her. He looked
“ earnestly at me, and it seemed to be a painful
“ effort to understand what I said. When he
“ did, he only said to me with an expression of
“ bitter agony, ‘ Oh, do you think she’ll come
“ before I die ? ’ It seemed a hard question
“ to answer. His sinking cheeks and hectic
“ colour, his wasted hands and fast-shortening
“ breath, all seemed to give but little hope
“ that the poor Soldier Boy would ever see his
“ old Mother on earth again. He seemed to
“ read my thoughts in my face. ‘ Then you
“ think I shan’t, and she’ll come and see her
“ Robert dead, and then she’ll go back and
“ sit in that cottage all alone, and I shan’t
“ hear her say, ‘ Robert, I forgive you ? ’

“ He burst into fresh tears ; the extreme sor-
“ row he showed about his Mother, convinced
“ me that he was a Boy of unusual feeling,
“ and increased my interest in him. I urged
“ him strongly to consider his Sins, especially

“ the Sin of Disobedience, which he was soon
“ to answer for. I tried to show him, that his
“ bitter Trial, now in not seeing his Mother
“ by his side, was a punishment for his great
“ Disobedience in leaving her, whom God had
“ left him to cherish, and for allowing his
“ mind to dwell on desires which he knew
“ were wrong. He listened earnestly to all I
“ said, but could say but little, though from
“ what he did, I felt convinced he was very
“ penitent. I easily discovered, that his sin in
“ leaving home had hindered him in following
“ up a religious life, and had led him by de-
“ grees to neglect his Prayers and attendance
“ at Church ; that he had gone on from bad to
“ worse, because he lived in an unrepented
“ Sin, which his leaving his Mother was, be-
“ cause he would not make the only restitu-
“ tion now in his power,—to let her know
“ where he was, and acknowledge his fault.
“ He had put off Repentance—he had shunned
“ thinking, for he feared it,—so he had fallen
“ under the influence of his evil companions,
“ and now his Sin had been the cause of his
“ death ; but I had every reason to think,
“ that, though his punishment was bitter here,
“ yet that a gracious God allowed him time
“ to repent, and find a Pardon through the
“ Merits of Jesus Christ. He sought it in the
“ few days in which I saw him, ‘carefully, and
“ with tears.’ Each day he got lower and lower.

“ each day gave less hope; and his agony to
“ see his Mother was each day disappointed.
“ ‘ Oh, if I could but see her old red cloak at
“ yonder door,’ he would say to me, ‘ if I
“ could but see her once again—but I know I
“ deserve it all.’ The poor youth strove to
“ be patient; he used to have his pillow so
“ propped up, that he might see the door at
“ the end of the long dark barrack-room, and
“ watch for her; every sound roused him; he
“ thought it was her step: I can fancy I see
“ him now, with his sad blue eye, which had
“ lost so much of its lustre by approaching
“ death, and his pale wasted cheek; his
“ Soldier’s cloak thrown over him, and his
“ thin, worn-out hands clasped on his breast,
“ as he lay, propped up in bed, ‘ waiting for
“ his Mother.’ ”

Through many a dark winter’s night, did Widow Lee lie in her little workhouse bed, and think of Robert; then she would fall asleep, and dream that he was with her like he used to be; and when she woke and found he was not there, she would come down to her solitary corner of the Woman’s Ward, and think about him; what had she else to think of in this world? she was a Widow, and Robert was her only Son, but he never wrote, and she had heard nothing of him since he went away. I was the bearer of the first news she heard; she was sitting, as usual, in her

corner, her small black silk bonnet on her head, and her red cloak drawn round her. I gave her a note from her Son—the note will best tell its own tale :

“ Dear Mother,—This comes hoping it finds you well, as it leaves me very ill at present, God’s will be done. Mother, I’m a’ dying—Oh, Mother, make haste, and come and see your poor Robert before he dies—Mother dear, I can’t die without you say you forgive me—I shan’t live many days, so pray come, dear Mother,—and so no more at present, from your sinful son—Robert.”

“ Oh, Robert, my child, Robert,” cried the poor Mother, as she rose from her chair, and her streaming grey eyes were turned to heaven, and down her sunk and withered cheek the tears were dropping one by one ;—“ Oh, Robert, my child Robert, and won’t I go and see you, my poor dear Boy ? ” It will be long before I forget the figure of the poor Widow, as for the first time for many a long month, all her energy seemed roused. The people around stared with surprise. She staggered out of the room with my help, though I scarce knew what she would do, and when her feeble body had carried her to the foot of the Workhouse stairs, she sunk down upon the last step, and cried.

She set forth next day in a waggon for the

north ; a day or two passed ere she reached the town. She went straight towards the barracks ; she was dressed just as she always was, with her cloak and her black bonnet, and her oak stick was in her hand. A bell was tolling when she reached the castle gate, and a funeral was coming out—it was a Soldier's funeral ; first came Soldiers walking two by two—then the coffin, borne by six—and on the coffin a Soldier's cloak, and a Soldier's hat, and a Soldier's sword ; behind came the others, and then the band, which played the solemn music, as they walked on to the burial ; one by one, they left the castle gate, and they walked to the tune of the music.

The Widow stood among the crowd. "It's "Jack Morris, the drunkard," said a man in the mob, "he's been a bad one." She didn't know why, but the remark cheered the Widow's heart ; she had not had courage before to ask whose the funeral was—she had now. The last soldier had left the doorway ; the whole sad procession was winding slowly down the castle hill, ere the Widow reached the sentry-box, and asked the question. "Whose funeral ?" said the man, "Robert Lee's, as fine a lad as ever was seen, more's "the pity, to die so young :" and he turned away on his regular walk.

The mob joined in after the band, and in the crowd joined the Widow Lee—her red

cloak went with them all, and her oak stick helped her on—but she did not know where she went. The crowd grew thicker, but thick or not, the red cloak went with it; when the people ran, the poor old Widow ran too; when they walked, she walked; all the street was full, to see the young Soldier's funeral, but she knew not if it was full or not; what mattered it to her? her Boy was in that coffin, and that was all that mattered to her.

"Robert Lee, Robert Lee," said she to herself, "that's my Boy;" and then she would forget herself, and say, "It's Jack Morris's funeral;" then she would ask a little lad who stood by, and he looked up in the old woman's face, and said, "It's Robert Lee, "ma'am, the Soldier Boy," and her face would fall, as she said, "Ah, yes, yes, Robert Lee, "that's my poor Boy."

The people talked about him, and said, "how fine a lad he was! and how quick his "death was! and how he had an old Mother "somewhere in the country! and how since "the sodgers came to the castle, there wasn't "a finer lad than Robert Lee;" and more than once the old Widow stopped to hear them talk, and fixed her vacant grey eye full in their faces; but before they had finished the sentence, she seemed to have lost its meaning, and hobbled on amid the crowd. The music

was very sad and grand, and all the people seemed to feel it so, and as the young Soldier's coffin passed along, there were many who dropped a tear. But his mother did not cry; once she came near the coffin, and laid hold on the heavy pall; a soldier pushed her off; "Stand back, there," said the man. She looked up in his face, and drew back: "And why stand back? isn't he who lies there, more to me than to all this crowd? haven't I more to do with him than you all? didn't you call him Robert Lee; and what's Robert Lee to you, to what he is to me?" They thought she was mad, and they pushed her back into the crowd. They reached the church-yard gate; some went after the coffin into the ground, and Widow Lee went too. The Service was read in the Church, and she heard it read. The coffin was carried out to the grave, and she followed it; the people noticed her; some said, "See yon old woman, how fast she follows the coffin; is she mad? or maybe she's his Mother." The coffin was about to be let down into its last home, when she pushed forward, and laid hold on it: "And will you put him down into that ground, and I haven't seen him; and mayn't I have one look at his dear blue eye and his fair hair, as I used to stroke when he was little? Oh, Robert, Robert, my pretty Boy, and shan't

" I have a look on you once again ; and
" when I came all the way to say I *did* for-
" give you—and oh, don't I, didn't I forgive
" you, from my very heart ?—Sirs, he as lies
" there, is more to me than to any of you
" —didn't he leave never a word for his poor
" old Mother ?" and the Widow sunk down
upon her child's coffin.

The roughest Soldier's cheek was wet ; they let down the coffin, and they filled up the grave. They fired the gun over it, and they marched quickly away. The music sounded merrily as the band returned from the young Soldier's funeral. The last Soldier had left the church-yard gate—the broad red light of the sinking sun fell sad and full on the quiet burial ground, and on the red cloak which was lying by the new-dug turf ; and when the sun was gone, and the cold, still, twilight hovered over the tombs, the Widow was still there—lying by Robert's grave.

He had not forgotten his Mother,—he waited for her day after day, propped up in his bed, but she never came ; the Clergyman said he thought it hastened his death, fretting for her ; he was with him when he died ; he closed his eyes, for he had no one else to do it. He died leaning on the pillow, as if he was still expecting something to the last. A few minutes before the last struggle, he started, and mentioned her name. The .

Minister said he died truly penitent and most patient: and fully seeing how deeply his Sin of Disobedience had brought God's chastening Hand on him. He died in humble Trust on Jesus Christ,—he breathed his last in the long dark barrack-room,—and as the old Soldier threw his cloak across his young dead face, he said, “there's gone as fine a lad as ever “came into the regiment.” He left a note for his Mother, written faintly with a trembling hand: “Dear Mother,—Don't fret for me, “I have looked for you day and night.—Love “God, dear Mother, and pray God we may “meet some day.”

The Widow came back to the Union; where else should she go? one place was as good as another to her now: she had no home on earth except it was Robert's Grave. She had only two wishes: The first was, to be sent once a year to see his grave: and any little trifle which she had given her, was treasured up to pay for keeping it “tidy,” as she used to say.—Her other wish was, that when she died, her bones might lie by his bones.

THE END.



THE COTTAGE.

THE
Cottage in the Lane.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MARY COOPER," &c.



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THE

Cottage in the Lane.

STORIES taken from the events of cottages are not likely to be as full of incident as those which are not written from real life; but they have the interest of being true, and that makes up for much.

The same apology was made for the publication of Mary Cooper, in the case of which, I have had reason to think that the excuse was considered sufficient; and I will now, therefore, detail another cottage story from the same village.

In one of the most retired and sheltered lanes of my parish, a family lived, composed of a man and his wife and two sons ; they had other children, but they were settled in the world. They had always seemed quiet well-disposed people, and were much respected by their neighbours.

At the time of the event of my story, Wilmot had been suffering for some time from many infirmities of a premature old age ; and his wife, who was many years younger than himself, was the chief support of the family. She was a kind active woman, and remarkable for good sense and the uprightness of her life,—one of those women, whom we may call the boast of our nation, whose pride and constant object it was to share her husband's anxieties, and to make a happy home for her children. Nothing she so much enjoyed as to see them all gathered round her fireside. I have often been struck with the perfect picture of family union which that cottage presented, when she had succeeded in gathering round her all those who, as she used to say, “when they were “little, played under that very woodbine “which has now grown so high over the “cottage roof.”

Poor woman ! the most united families must have their severings, and the kindest mother's heart sometimes be broken !

William was her elder son, at this time scarcely twenty, and John a few years younger. They were both delicate in health, and had been but little exposed to the difficulties of a labourer's life, since their fond mother had never suffered them to seek a home away from her roof: when they were at work, their wages went to swell the family income; when unable to find employment, her untired energy never let them want.

William was the favourite son, and if there was one feature in his character more striking than another, it was his devoted affection for his mother: often, when a boy, he would stay at home, while others went to play, that he might read aloud to her during her work, or to try and share with her the toil of household labour.

If there was a flower in the garden which she cared for above another, it was William who watched and watered it; or if her tall slender figure was seen returning home through the village lane with the "*shop-things*," it was always William who shared her burden. He was himself, as I have said, very delicate in health, and never roughed it in the world; he was not given to the open vices of other boys, and from his quiet gentle habits was generally looked kindly at by the neighbours.

So time passed away, and William grew

up from boyhood to a man ; the same features of character were still remarkable in him, and his deep affection was but little roughened by advancing years.

He was scarce twenty, when a change took place in his situation in life, which gave rise to the events of my story.

Amongst those of the neighbours by whom Mrs. Wilmot was most respected, was a family who lived in a cottage a stone's-throw from their door ; its little thatched roof and pale pink roses used to peep over the hedge-row which ran in front of Wilmot's home. Ellen Wood was the eldest and fairest of their family, and from a child had been the playmate of William and his brother.

It would not, perhaps, be quite true, if we said that Mrs. Wilmot had had no desire that Ellen should be her daughter-in-law. She was a sweet gentle girl, and often, when left at home to watch her little brothers and sisters as she sat at work by the cottage door, neighbours have said, "Ellen was a good girl, and would make a good wife some day."

Whether William's mother joined in this opinion or not, is not for us to say ; enough that, when scarcely eighteen, Ellen became William's wife, and took up her abode under Wilmot's roof.

For some months, their life went by happily enough. With the Wilmots work was

plentiful, and they seldom knew what it was to want even the comforts of life.

Ellen was very happy in her new home; her husband loved her dearly, and showed his affection by the kindest attention. If she had one trouble, it was that she noticed occasionally, and with pain, a growing inactivity and indolence in William. This was sometimes shown in his religious duties; and would often interfere with his attendance on divine service. She put it down to the over-affection of his mother, who had never sufficiently urged William to activity and independence, nor taught him that effort and self-denial are required in the actions of life, whether for this world or the next. This tendency in William at length brought him into trouble.

Hard times came, bitter times, and work got scarce. Old Wilmot himself grew more infirm; and William felt he ought to strive after work himself away from home. It was a cruel time, and often they sat down to eat a slender meal compared with old days. But the mother's constant cheerfulness kept all straight. William was out for weeks together, now getting a few days' work, and then for days without any. He generally returned with what he had on Saturday night, and Ellen was always waiting his return from his long absence in the lane or by the garden.

gate. It was always long, for a day was long to her. She never gave way to low spirits; poor girl! I can see her calm mild eye fixed upon her unceasing work, as she sat for days and days by her mother-in-law's door, with her face always turned towards the part to which William had gone. He always returned as soon as he could, but his periods of absence grew longer and longer, and he always seemed more sad each time he came back. He was naturally desponding; and though Ellen did take the bright side of things, he always ended with "Dear Ellen, I will be cheerful "for your sake, but times are not as they "were."

At last William heard of work; it was far away, full a hundred miles; he determined to take it, and that when he was settled Ellen should follow him.

It was a sad day at Wilmot's cottage when William was to go; it was at the end of summer, and never did the lane look so sweet and sad. The little garden was full of late flowers, which he had planted; the very woodbine was throwing out its late blossoms round the door—the same tree which, when a boy, he had always taken care of, because, as he used to say, "Mother *loved it so.*" It was evening when he turned away from his home; the setting sun was shining with its glorious red light in at the cottage

door and up the lane, catching here and there the bright-coloured boughs of the trees. Ellen leant against the door-post, with her eyes fixed on the ground; she could not cry, for her heart was too full. His mother followed him to the garden gate, and watched the figure of her "*own dear*" boy, as he moved along the lane with his small bundle under his arm; she watched him till she could see him no more, not even the long shadow which he threw by the hedge-side. William scarcely ventured to look up till he was gone far from his home; he did once, and his eye fell on Ellen's cottage, and her little sister Jean leaning against the door-post, as Ellen used before they were married; his tender heart could not bear that, so he did not look round again, till he was far out of sight of his native village.

Ellen continued very sad when William was gone; she only roused herself to help Mrs. Wilmot, and to try and cheer her at the loss of her son; when alone, dark thoughts hung on her mind which she could not shake off,—she knew not why. Day after day came and brought no news of her husband, and she could not rest; indeed, there was a sadness throughout Wilmot's cottage,—it was so different from what it used to be. The mother talked of bright days to come, and did her best to rouse the drooping spirits of the rest.

At length a letter came from William ; it was for Ellen, to beg her to follow him as soon as possible. Mrs. Wilmot was loth to lose her, but the poor girl could not rest. "I must go to my own William," she said, whenever her mother urged her to delay her going a little longer; "I know he is so helpless without me, and besides, I told him "I would follow him when he sent for "me." Nothing could persuade her to stay, though the wet weather had now set in, and her own health was far from strong. On the day fixed by William, she bade good bye to the Wilmots and her much loved native village,—above all, her own peaceful home, where she had spent so many happy days; that was the worst pang of all; and as she turned away from her parents' cottage, around which her little sisters stood weeping because their kind Ellen was going away, there were few hearts at the moment more sad than hers. She took the field-path, where she had so often gathered hedge-flowers when a child; and as she met and said "Good bye" to many an old friend who passed her on her solitary walk, her heart heaved high with sorrow; for all, old and young, were sad to lose Ellen Wilmot.

William's work was on a railroad, as I have said, full a hundred miles from his own home; it was far from a village, so he was compelled

to take a small cottage, or rather hut, by the road-side. It looked dull and cheerless the first sad evening he sat down to his evening meal ; "Ah, well," he thought, "it will all look well again when Ellen comes." Ellen did come at last, and all did seem right for a while again. But troubles began to thicken ; more than once William's indolent disposition threw him out of work ; his wife's health grew more and more delicate, and this made matters worse, as William entirely depended upon her to be kept up and urged to activity. She did her best ; she always spoke kindly to him in his most irritated moods.

Hitherto they had continued on each Sunday to go together to the parish church, which was a mile from their home ; and while Ellen could go with him, Wilmot was ready enough to go, but it was scarcely with sufficient sense of duty himself ; and when she became too ill to go, there was always some excuse against his going. His wife watched these signs of indecision and want of principle with anxiety. When she felt more than usually ill, he would read to her the word of God ; but if she did not ask him, it would lie for days on the shelf, unread by him.

Principles, however good, must weaken under such conduct ; this his wife knew well. There was but one thing he was active in—willingly active—and that was in nursing

her; this he would do whole days and nights, and whatever his faults were, he never was guilty of neglect of Ellen.

Long months rolled away in this manner, during which they buried two infants, and William's employment was most irregular. It was true, times were hard, and he could not always find work, but too often his want of exertion threw him out of employment.

Three years passed away since they had left their home, from which they often heard by letters. William had become more careless still, and had fallen under the influence of bad companions on the railroad. Ellen had long dreaded this. He had now been for some weeks out of regular work; they had been reduced to real want. His fireless hearth and pale thin wife well nigh broke poor William's heart: he would sit hour after hour at the window, brooding over dull thought; or would stand at his cottage door, cutting a stick till he had cut it all away, and then listlessly would wander forth, and not return till late at night. All this Ellen watched with deep sorrow; still more so, when, as was often the case, Wilmot would return in company with idle dissolute youths, who, like himself, had been thrown out of work.

“Oh, Will, Will, let us go home again, “and try to work there; we cannot be worse

"off than we are here," said Ellen one day, when her husband had returned home in the way I have described above, hoping that the influence of old associations at his once loved home would recall William to his better feelings.

"Well, Ellen, we will in a week or so; "but I have a job promised me with some "young fellows here; when that is done, "I shall have enough to pay our journey "and go."

"Let us go at once; let us go to-morrow," said his wife, dreading any employment with the companions William had lately joined. "And what is the work you have with them, "dear Will? Nothing, I'm sure, that will "bring you credit." "Well, one or two "days more, Ellen, and then—" "And "then what? And then perhaps you are "ruined and lost. No, no, Will, mind me, "mind your own dear wife, and come home "to-morrow." But he was for a day or two more, and not even Ellen could persuade him. She had particular reasons for dreading the mention of work with those he spoke of, and a thousand boding thoughts filled her mind.

It was late on the same evening, after the above conversation, that Wilmot left his cottage. It was dark,—so almost vain for his wife to trace his footsteps over the field-path

by which he went; but she did try and watch him, and, when watching was vain, poor Ellen went back to pray.

It was midnight; the wind blew loud and cold; no stars were seen; and dark heavy clouds rolled over the sky: Ellen was watching again, when the sound of many footsteps passed quickly by her door. There was a small mud hut about half a mile down the road. It belonged to a woman of the name of Sturges; a person who was in the habit of selling beer to the workmen, and of taking lodgers. She was a cross petulant woman, and often engaged in disputes with the workmen, which raised her many enemies. Such was the case now; and this night had been fixed on to attack and plunder her hut. Wilmot knew but little of their intention, and was led to join them under the promise of gaining something. The darkness of the night favoured their design: all was silent around the hut when the band of men reached it. "Who will burst the door?" said the leader of the band. There was a moment's pause, during which a light flashed across the interior of the hut. "Kick down the door," said many voices from behind. William stood nearest, and was instantly pushed on by the rest; he fell against the door, which, being loosely hung, instantly fell. A loud scream from within immediately followed, as

the terrified woman, throwing down her candle, rushed against the advancing figures. It was all darkness and confusion. They immediately proceeded to dismantle the house, throwing the furniture into the road, and drinking the beer she kept for sale : what they could not drink, they poured into the road. Wil-mot scarcely knew what was passing ; he took no part in it. He had not courage to defend the woman, nor at once to leave the desperate gang. He seemed like one bewildered; all seemed lost, and he gave himself blindly to whatever might happen. The work was soon completed, and the men returned as silently and quickly as they came. Wil-mot stopped at his own house, and found Ellen waiting for him. "Where have you "been, Will?" said Ellen, as he entered ; "you are all over blood. Oh, William!"

"Hush!" said her husband, shutting and fastening the door ; "let us to bed and more "of that to-morrow." His wife silently and sadly obeyed. She could not sleep, but lay listening to the wind, which blew loudly outside. William seemed to sleep. It was all so strange. A low tap was heard at the outer door ; it was twice repeated ere Ellen could go and open it, and the second was accompanied by the ominous word "*Police.*" A thousand wild thoughts rushed over poor Ellen's brain, as with a trembling

hand she opened the door. “ William Wilmot,” was asked for by the same voice. Ellen could not answer. “ Does he live here, ‘ girl?’ ” said the man roughly. William answered the question for himself; “ I am ‘ William Wilmot, and am ready to go ‘ where you will; only spare her—don’t ‘ touch a hair of her head, or I have that ‘ in me which could lay you dead on my ‘ floor.’ ” William’s eye fell on poor Ellen, whose pale face and thin worn-out figure had sunk against the wall for support. He sprung to lift her up. “ Come, come,” said the man, “ we cannot wait; we have more ‘ to take to-night; you must come at once.” “ Oh, Ellen! poor Ellen!” said the broken-hearted youth, as he tried to support her, heedless of their order. “ Go, William, go, “ never mind me; it will but make them “ more angry.” “ Not mind you, Ellen!—“ go with them and leave you!—you, whom “ I have loved so dearly!” It was all in vain, he was dragged away; and with what agony, as he crossed his own door-way, did he look round at his wife, and see her sink to the ground, and no one to help her! But it was too late; he was hurried away, and Ellen was left alone. How bitter were Wilmot’s feelings, as he was led on towards his destination! If he had but minded his wife’s advice, gone home, and given up

his evil companions, all would have been well. How little he once thought it would come to this!

It was at this time I visited Wilmot's cottage one day, when Mrs. Wilmot placed in my hand a letter, containing the sad story I have told above. It was from Ellen; she seemed broken-hearted; her concluding words were, "He will be tried on Wednesday at "Kingston; I shall be there." The family of Wilmot were thrown into the deepest sorrow. One moment, they thought the whole charge false; at another, the mother would say, she always thought something would come of his undecided inactive ways: they were bewildered with grief, and scarce knew what to think or say.

Mrs. Wilmot determined to meet poor Ellen at the trial, and left her home at the appointed day. At an early hour she was standing near the door of the court, but Ellen was there before her; she had reached it before morning dawned, and had asked more than one passing stranger, what chance there was for "Will, her Will;" some laughed at her, others more kindly pitied her, and passed on. Her thin pale face and torn gown, and the little slender shawl which in vain tried to cover her from the cold, were indeed enough to make her an object of attention. She had been obliged to part with all her

clothes to pay her journey up. She was walking hastily up and down the street, looking anxiously up at every house, as if she expected to see her husband, and yet she knew not why.

Mrs. Wilmot had drawn close to her before Ellen saw her ; the next moment she had buried her aching head in her mother-in-law's bosom : " Oh, mother, mother ! is it not " dreadful ? But they say he will not have " more than three months ; but the name of " it all ! the disgrace to you and father !" Poor Mrs. Wilmot was too much distressed to comfort Ellen then,—she only drew her aside from the main street, where they were becoming objects of attraction : " Let " us hope the best, girl, and pray God for " poor Will."

The people were now crowding near the door of the court-house, talking of the various rumours spread abroad about the fate of the prisoners who were to be tried that day for the " brutal affray on the railroad." William Wilmot's name was mentioned as the worst of the band, and Ellen heard it mentioned, but she hardly recognised it as her husband's ; she was quite lost. At last the doors were opened. Ellen and her mother were hurried along with the crowd ; the people seemed to discover they were friends of the criminals, and made way for them

with an idle stare. They could hardly support themselves to the place; Ellen leant on her mother's arm, for her trembling limbs could not otherwise have borne her on amid the crowd.

Prisoner was brought after prisoner, but not William. *They* were all on slight charges, and had slight punishments. Ellen thought each one spoke good for her. Each prisoner who came by she trembled to look at, for fear it might be William. At last he came: they knew it by the stir in the court, for he was the chief prisoner of the day's trial.

"Oh, mother, there's Will," said Ellen. He looked pale and ill. "Will," said a low, feeble voice, "I'm here;" the voice struck like death upon his ear. He turned, and saw Ellen; he knew her by her little torn shawl, and the faded ribbon on her bonnet, for he *could not* look in her face. He turned deadly pale as he stood before the judge. The trial lasted two hours; long hours they were to Ellen. All the evidence went against him; she tried to attend to it, but could not, for her mind wandered over a thousand things. Whenever William spoke, she started as if he spoke to her, and then became listless and seemingly unconcerned. At last the trial was over, and he was pronounced *guilty*. She knew he would be, all along,

and yet the word sounded awful, and she felt herself turn pale. Then came the sentence, "Fifteen years' transportation beyond "the sea." There was a pause. William had turned round twice, to look at Ellen ; " See how pert the young fellow is through " it all," cried a voice from the mob around. " Pert ! oh, will you call him pert, when " his own wife and his dear mother it is " he is looking at ? oh, Will, Will, my boy, " my own boy !" cried poor Mrs. Wilmot. " Hold your tongue, woman," said a man harshly, who stood near her, " it is contempt " of court."

But words were vain. The poor mother reached to William, who was staggering rather than walking from the bar ; " it is my boy, my own dear boy." William stretched out his hand to his mother, and his eye fell on Ellen as he passed ; as she was borne out by the crowd, and he too was driven on. There was no time for speaking then ; one more bitter look of anguish,—that thin form which was borne on by the mob—that was all. That form he had made thin by his folly : " Oh ! go where I will," he thought, " will not that figure be before me ?"

Ellen and her mother scarcely knew how they reached the door ; but they did, and the street too, before they had recovered themselves enough to think. The first object they

saw was the convict cart, trotting heavily down the street. Ellen turned away from the sickening sight: "Mother, we will wait here till to-morrow, and we may perhaps see William; they say friends may see prisoners on Wednesdays." The words nearly choked her, but she prayed inwardly, and became composed for the time. "I would have one last word with him before he goes, and who knows but what I may go with him?" said Ellen, her eye kindling at the very idea; this hope now buoyed her up. "Don't think that," said a man who was standing by, seemingly an official of the court, "they won't have such as you there; you won't even know where he's gone to." Poor Ellen shrunk away from the cruel speech, and followed her mother, who advised their going in search of a lodging for the night.

William's cell was dark and cold; two sets of iron bars were outside. He was glad to be alone. He threw himself down on the cold hard floor, and tried to think, but could not collect his thoughts. Ellen was always before his eyes. Now, it was Ellen by her own sweet cottage door, as she used to be before he married her; then, it was Ellen, the poor worn figure, with the little ragged shawl as she stood by the bar. They were scarcely thoughts, they were more like wild

"waking dreams. "Will she come and see
"me again?" he thought; "will she go away
"from me without one kind word? I do de-
"serve it, but yet she cannot do it." Then
he thought how desolate she was,—no husband
to protect her; and then she was so delicate,
so worn out by anxiety for him, what would
become of her? and he not even allowed to
hear of her!

Then he would pray, in the words in which
he used to pray as a child, which Ellen had
never let him forget; and he remembered
words from the Bible, which he used to read
to her when she was so ill: all that he ever
did that was good was mixed up and con-
nected with her. At last he slept; his
dreams roamed on in the same wild manner.
He woke up at Ellen's voice; he thought it
was but a dream, but it was her voice—her
own voice! She and her mother stood before
the iron grate. He pushed at the bars, but
they would not give way: "Thank God,
"you're come, Ellen; I thought you had
"gone away." He tried to grasp at her
hand through the bars, but could not; what
would he not have given to hold that
wasted hand once more in his? As his
eye fell upon it, he saw the wedding-ring
was gone; it struck him in a moment as a
sign of their separation. She saw his face
fall, and guessed the cause: "Don't fret

“ for that, Will, I only pawned it to pay
“ for my way up to the trial; I tried to
“ walk, but could not, and that was all I had
“ to part with ; I was loth to part with it,
“ but what could I do, dear Will, seeing
“ you was better than the ring? But don’t
“ fret, I’ll work hard to get it back; it’s
“ only in for four shillings.” William’s
heart sunk when he heard her talk of work-
ing hard. “ You work hard! why, Ellen,
“ you never had strength to do a day’s work
“ in your life !”

There was a silence for a moment ; the
very turnkey stopped short in his regular
walk up and down, and seemed to pity them.

“ Will, dear Will, they say I may come
“ out to you, perhaps.”

“ And if you might, would you really
“ come to me ?”

“ Would I not? I would work my way to
“ you by night and day, if I might come to
“ you,” said poor Ellen, bursting again into
tears. William threw himself on the ground,
and struck his head against the floor; “ Fifteen
“ years !” he said, “ fifteen years ! Oh, what
“ a long, long time !”

Mrs. Wilmot had scarcely spoken all this
time ; “ Mother, mother, dear mother,” ex-
claimed William, turning to her, “ don’t think
“ I love you the less because I don’t speak

“ to you ; I do love you, but you know
“ Ellen’s more to me than all the world.
“ Dear mother, don’t fret for me; I’ll be-
“ have well, when I’m gone away, and
“ I dare say if I do I may have my time
“ shortened; and thoughts of you and dear
“ Ellen will make me do and bear any-
“ thing.”

But then again dark thoughts seemed to come across him : what would Ellen do without him ? “ And then, Ellen, the little one we hoped to have ; it will have no father now.” “ Well, William, I must work hard and do my best, and God won’t forget us ; pray for me when you’re far away, and the same God will hear us both across the salt sea.”

Wilmot continued walking up and down the cell with hurried steps ; his wife leant against the iron bars ; they did not know what to say ; they felt they had everything to say, and yet could say nothing. The turnkey said it was time to go. “ You’ll come again and see me, won’t you, Ellen, before I go ? you can see me on Wednesday, and it’s likely I sha’n’t be gone by next Wednesday.” His mother promised they would come, but Ellen could not speak. “ And bring father, too,” said William ; “ I must see him once again. Poor old father ! and

"so ill too! it'll break his heart, I know it
"will."

William struggled once more to reach Ellen's hand, but could not. To use Mrs. Wilmot's own words, "It was so killing "like, to see the poor young things try to "reach each other through the bars."

The door closed, and the heavy key turned; William was again alone, left for seven more bitter days and nights to his own sad thoughts. All Ellen ever said to him came to his mind,—all her prayers, and the verses from the Bible she had often said to him in their days of trouble, and which she said she had learnt in her own mother's cottage,—and they seemed to cheer and comfort him. He thought of all she had been in troubled days; he always thought her conduct so beautiful, and he tried to be like her. It was his real pleasure to think of her, and through the dreary hours of the prison night a thousand pictures of Ellen came before him.

Ellen and Mrs. Wilmot left the prison, and the former went back to her home on the railroad, directly, to set matters in order before she left it for good. It was a sad journey to go all alone, but Ellen bore up as well as she could. When she reached the hut where they had lived together, she felt as if

her heart would break; but yet there was a pleasure in doing at least something for him that was going away. She sold the little furniture, in the vain hope he might be allowed to have what it brought.

It was only one week to the day when he should leave England, and she had promised to meet Mrs. Wilmot at the prison on the following Wednesday, to say good bye for the last time.

It was on one day during this week, that I met William's mother running hurriedly towards my house with a letter in her hand; it was from Ellen,—a letter she had got written by a person of influence in the village where they lived, to the judge who had condemned her husband.

She thought her mother would be able to send it through me. The letter had been written hurriedly, and was sent without a signature,—therefore it was useless. It seemed enough to break the poor mother's heart to hear this, she did so cling to the hope that it might help him.

I remember the touching words with which she met me: "Oh, sir, here's a letter from Ellen. Don't you think it will save him?" It was too late then, for the next morning was his last day.

At five in the morning Mrs. Wilmot set

out for London. Wilmot was determined to go, and was taken in blankets to the cart; for he said he couldnt "die without " seeing poor William once more, for I shall " never live till he comes back." It was a sad party. John went with them.

They reached the prison at the time appointed. There it was, all just as it had been a week before: the iron bars, in two rows; poor William in the little stone cell, as if he had stood just where he was ever since his wife and mother left him last Wednesday. Old Wilmot came in last; William watched them all coming up without speaking, but when he saw his father, who was so ill, brought in last, it was too much,—he burst into tears: "Oh, father, dear old father, and " you too!" "Yes, my poor boy! my poor " boy! who'd have thought it would have " come to this?" said his father, his voice shaking for sorrow. There was one not there, and the prisoner's eye kept wandering over the figures before him restlessly—Ellen was not there. "Where's Ellen?" he said at last; he had not asked at once, lest, he said, "his mother should think he was "not glad to have her there." No one had seen Ellen. He was sure nothing would have kept her away. "Was she ill? or "dead, perhaps?"

Her absence quite maddened him ; he could not talk to the others with any comfort ; it was all, "Ellen, his Ellen ;" as Mrs. Wilmot expressed it, "he was just like a mad thing "because she was not there."

The time for seeing friends was nearly gone —only a quarter of an hour more—when Ellen came ; she was pale and breathless, and nearly fainted. Poor girl ! she had come up too late for the train, and had to walk many miles that morning, though her strength was very small. It was the thought of William gave her strength, "and God had heard her "prayer," she said, "or she could never "have got through the walk ; she would "rather have died than missed seeing him." "Only ten minutes more," said the turnkey ; and what could they say in those ten minutes ? and they had to say all they could say again to each other for fifteen long years, if ever again ; and this when they had loved each other so dearly ! William seemed distracted : "Oh, Ellen, Ellen ! pray God take "care of you when I am gone away."

"Yes ! yes ! don't fret for me, Will ; I "shall do. Be good out there, and you will "be away less time." There was not time for many words, and if there had been, Ellen's sorrow was such that she could do little else but sob. William had determined

to bear up as well as he could, and he certainly did; but it was a bitter parting when it came to the last. One by one they left the sad cell. Ellen came out last; she meant to have the last look at William, but after all she could not, for she was out of the little narrow passage before she could take courage to look up.

Ellen came down the day after to her native village to stay with Mrs. Wilmot; she was broken-hearted, poor girl! I saw her the evening she arrived; she scarcely spoke. It was in Wilmot's cottage,—the very home where he had spent so many happy days, and where she had so often watched him as a boy watering his mother's garden. But all this was over now, and she must seek a means of support,—though how, I know not; and Wilmot and his wife are too poor and old to support her, and she far too weak and delicate to work. As she says, "her William " has spoilt her for work, he always took " such care of her." It was very sad work that evening to sit where he had so often sat, and to think of him in the cold solitary prison; almost the only remark I heard her make was, "Oh! I wish I had leave to go " with him, I should be so glad!"

Ellen has since been staying with the Wilmots. It is now a week since the day of

taking leave of William, and they have not heard that he has sailed.

We may hope that God of his infinite mercy will draw his mind to spiritual things under his affliction. There seems certainly an inclination to think far more religiously than ever before.

The poor Wilmots seem bowed down with sorrow. The father never leaves his chimney corner, where he sits incessantly gazing into the fire; "My poor boy, my "poor boy!" are almost his only words. It is a sad house now to what it once was, when in a summer's evening the whole family were gathered together round him at the door, or made poor Mrs. Wilmot happy by seeing them all around her fire in the winter's night. It is the time of mourning; I trust it has been, and hope it is, a time of resignation. I know not what will become of poor Ellen, or of her little one when it is born; they will be desolate, but He who takes care of the fatherless and widow will not forsake her.

William's work must now be one of penitence. In acting as he did, he plunged many into trouble. Had he but minded Ellen's advice, he might now have been with her, and not in his cold dreary dungeon.

But what is worse still, he knew once and

knew well what religion was; but he too little acted upon it, or used the means which God has appointed by which we may become good.

His religion was one of feeling, and not of principle. But if his bitter lot be the means of bringing him to God at last, he will some day have reason to rejoice that God has overruled his penalty for his eternal good.

When he will sail we do not know; it will be well when he does, as it makes poor Ellen's heart ache to think that he is so near her, and yet that she is unable to be with him.

The day may come when I shall have the means of telling a tale of their further history; at present their cottage in the quiet lane of my village is a scene of sad associations, and striking warning against inactivity and carelessness, whose consequences in this world will sometimes be as bad as those of more overt and determined vice.

I have just seen Ellen in the afternoon of the day in which I have finished this story, and have seldom seen an object which more deservedly calls for our sympathy and pity; but she is now calm and resigned; and though the bright happy associations which once so sweetly attached themselves to the

quiet home and sunny garden have passed away, yet there is a deeper lesson of religion to be read in Ellen's calm wasted face, and the sorrowful but humbled family of the Cottage in the Lane.*

* Should these lines meet the eye of any benevolent person, who may be disposed to aid in alleviating so distressing a case as that of Ellen Wilmot, the author begs to mention that any communication may be made to him through the publisher, Mr. Burns.





THE DRUNKARD'S BOY.

TRUE

Stories of Cottagers.

THE DRUNKARD'S BOY.



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The Drunkard's Boy.

THERE were few little girls who came to the village school, or joined in the play of the summer's evening, with so glad a heart as Susan Newton; so I have been told by those who can remember the time;—though the time has now long gone by,—indeed, one would scarce believe the word to look at her now, the very picture of a breaking heart. She has lately occupied a cottage in my village, and as her story is one from which some lessons may be learnt for good, I will tell it,

under the hope that it may be useful ; although the lesson is more one of warning, than good example.

She did not live in this village when she was a child, but came to live here in after-life. She spent her childhood in the cottage her parents had lived in for many years ; and being their only child, was soon spoiled by indulgence and a foolish attention which was paid to all her fancies. She was naturally generous and gay of heart, which hid her faults, and made her a favourite in many a cottage besides her father's. It was always Susan Newton who headed the little village gang of children who trooped forth to play on the common, as no game could go on without her ; or if any question of right was to be settled among them, it was Susan who was made the judge.

So years passed away ; and the merry little girl of Newton's cottage had changed her childish companions for those of older age, and the village game for the hay-field or the harvest. She was still the same, as a young woman, as she had been as a child—gay, kind, and open-hearted. She had many friends, and scarcely one who would say an ill word of her ; but gaiety and good-nature will not be enough to make us happy ; where they are not governed by religion, they are too likely to lead us into imprudent and

thoughtless actions. So it was with Newton's child.

Brought up to think life was but a scene of gaiety and merriment, pleased at pleasing others, and led by that to think she was fulfilling all her duty, she seldom thought much of what she did, or felt the need of denying herself.

When very young, Susan married a youth, who had come up to the village in search of work: he bore an ill character; and by his actions and words, he plainly showed that he had not the fear of God before his eyes. His wild unsteady manner attracted the attention of the careless of the village; and Susan thought at the time that none could be so happy as she was. But mere light-heartedness is not enough to make us happy; when we act without thought, and without an intention to please God, we cannot succeed in life; and so Susan found. She and her husband took a cottage in his own village, and lived there for many years; they had several children during this time; but year after year brought more cares and more troubles, and before Susan had been a wife five years, she had lost all her merriment, and her face had become worn and anxious. Her husband soon proved to be wilful and tyrannical; he was sadly given to drinking, and his wife very soon losing the little influence she ever held over

him, he soon gave himself up to the worst habits, and spent his earnings away from home, and seldom brought home sufficient money to supply his wife and children with daily bread. Poor Susan! It was a hard trial for her: her high spirits had sunk; and with many a tear in her eye, she would look around on her four little children, and cry again to see their pale, sickly faces, which want and neglect had produced.

The cottage became dirty and neglected, and matters seemed to grow worse every day; their living was of the coarsest kind, and barely sufficient to support life. Whenever I paid a visit to her cottage, I found Susan sitting among her three or four children, as if she had given up every thing in despair, and thought it a hopeless case to attempt to save herself or them from ruin. I asked her to send her children to school, as her elder boys were well able to learn, and were spending their days in utter idleness; but she always had an excuse ready for keeping them at home. It was never a good one, and it seemed that want and cruel treatment had produced an indolence and sluggishness, which made her dread any exertion for herself or them. This carelessness of his wife only made Rogers dislike his home more and more. Every thing was wretched within doors; his children dirty and cross; his wife

silent and seemingly indifferent to every thing; no care taken for his comfort; so that he imagined he had a good excuse for staying away from home, and spending the evenings, and often whole nights, in the public-house. Bad management and ill-temper or indifference in a wife often increase ten-fold the husband's faults. It is too likely, as in this case, that she has much true fault to find, and the blame lies chiefly at the husband's door; but how often a little mild cheerfulness under trouble, a willingness to bear difficulties and ill-treatment, would bring round a husband, and reclaim him to better ways! Bad management often brings on more evils and misery than real poverty; and so, though too late, Susan found. She, like many others, when she found matters go ill, gave them up in despair, and every day increased her own and her family's distress: such conduct makes the husband imagine he has an excuse, when he has really none.

In the midst of these troubles, one of their children died. Rogers *did* feel its death, and *did* feel that his cruelty had been the cause of it; and when he saw its poor little wasted body, so wan and thin from want, laid out in the miserable coffin they were obliged to beg from the parish, because they could not afford to buy one, he shed tears over it. They were the first he had shed for many a day:

and his wife was glad to see them flow, but she did not understand how to treat him; and only heaped reproaches on him for his conduct, instead of trying to soften him towards the other children: "It's your fault, "all of it, Jem; it's all of your getting drunk: "here's what's come of it.—I knew he was a "dying this many a long day, and he wanted "food, and I had none to give it; all the "long nights last week, when you were out, "it was crying for food, and I had nothing "to give it but rinds, and what was that for "a little dying thing? Oh, Jem, Jem! God "will give you what you deserve for this." For the first time for a long while, Rogers took his wife's upbraiding without returning it with blows and oaths, and when he thought of the truth of what she said, and looked round on the squalid children that sat crouching and crying over the fire of potatoe rinds, crying because "little baby was dead," (for even its wailing cry of pain had been an interest to them all, and made them love it,) he sat down and cried too. Had his wife known how to manage him, much might have been done then; but severe reproaches could not be the way of bringing round a hardened and miserable man. The next day they followed the child to the church-yard: it was a wretched sight, the poor tattered rags of black that hung on the dirty clothes

of Susan and her children, as they followed hand in hand the body of the infant, whose very sickness had become customary to them. Rogers's bewildered expression, and poor Susan's worn and haggard look, gave a miserable picture of a drunkard's family. They returned to their wretched home: it was the first evening Rogers had spent at home for many a long day. Susan only sat sobbing, and giving hints of the child's death being caused by her husband, while he stood looking vacantly out of the window; till tired of her reproaches, and seeming to connect his trouble with better and more serious things, he took down the Bible, which had long lain neglected on the shelf, and read to himself. It was a consciousness that sorrow and regret for the past should lead him to better things; but he required guidance, and his wife, who once knew well what was right herself, might have done much for him now; but she had so allowed all better things to be ruined in her by indolence, that she did not try to follow up the better feeling which seemed at the moment to occupy her husband's mind. The children only stared to see their father so employed, and having lost all respect for him, from hearing their mother so constantly blame him, and find fault with him in their presence, they were more inclined to laugh to each other at the strange

change ; and when, with a kindlier feeling towards them, the wretched father called them to him, they only shrank from him with their accustomed fear, and refused to come. So the evening passed, and in the morning Rogers went out to his usual work,—but still more than ever anxious to forget his home and the miseries of the past. For a few days his conduct was better, his manner kinder, and his words quieter. But finding no encouragement, this improvement wore off, and Rogers became bad as ever.

I mention this story of the child's death, to show how much may be made of the season of affliction, which often touches the hardest heart, and which is sent by God to be the time for guiding the wandering into the paths of right. How wrong it is for a wife to let such blessed seasons slip away ; and how mistaken to spend them in heaping reproaches and bitter complaints, instead of guiding by kindness and gentleness ! I well believe that children are often the means of bringing the most hardened father to better feeling ; and a sorrow like Rogers's for his infant, however unnatural it might seem, after his own cruel conduct, was for a time real and genuine, and ordered by God to do good. I saw Rogers once or twice during this week, but all the use of such interviews was destroyed by the foolish conduct of his wife. So



time passed away, and matters grew no better for Susan Rogers. Other children passed her door, clean, healthy, and merry. She always sighed or murmured when she looked from them to her own poor ragged little ones, and laid all the blame in her own mind on her husband's conduct; she forgot she was as much the cause, and that an exertion on her part, and striving to act with diligence in her calling, would have made great changes. Other children went to school, but not hers—and she even thought this a matter of complaint; she forgot it was all her fault, and that the excuse she pleaded of poverty was nothing, as she had had the offer of sending them free of expense. Other cottages looked clean and comfortable to hers; it gave her a pang to see it, but she was satisfied it was no fault of hers; there was not a drunken husband there—she had one—so there was no help. She forgot that many a tidy cottage *had* drunken masters, but that there were some wives who saw it their duty to make the best of things, and make their homes comfortable and cheerful; and that by doing this, they did the best thing to reclaim their husbands, to make them love their homes, and thus to hide their faults from other people. Other men seemed to improve, her husband grew worse; simply because she never tried to please him, or bear with him.

while other wives did their best. There was no quarrelling in other houses, there was always in hers ; but it was half her own making: of course, there will be quarrelling, where one will not give way, and give up, at least, sometimes; and she knew well that this was a christian wife's duty, and knew it better than her husband, for he had always been sadly neglected from a child ; but she chose to wait until he began. It was waiting in vain, and this she might have known long ago ; but going on neglecting our duty, and acting contrary to what we know to be right, will blind our eyes to what is our right course. She made a point of exposing her husband's faults to every one she talked with, instead of doing what a wife should—strive to hide them to the utmost ; and what was worse, she would even expose his faults before her children, and so destroyed their respect for him, and made him an object of fear to them all.

Matters were not likely to improve in this state of things. Among Susan's children she had one who, in spite of all her foolish management, had grown up to be better in his conduct than could have been expected. It was her eldest boy, who had reached his fifteenth year, at the time of the event which I am now about to describe. He was a good-looking youth, with a sweet and gentle expression of

countenance, and a singularly quiet and mild manner. He had a strong affection for his mother, very far beyond what one could have expected from his mother's conduct,—and a considerable feeling of respect for his father. He was desirous of pleasing them both ; and often bore, with the greatest patience, his father's blows and angry words. He was now the eldest of six children ; and showed the greatest kindness and attention to his brothers and sisters. He had been taught but little ; yet, what he had learned, he had made the best use of. Poor Susan, despite all her foolish conduct, had tried to teach her children many religious lessons, which she remembered from her own early education ; and had always made her children say their prayers night and morning, and sometimes would read to them the Bible. Joseph, her eldest boy, had learned to read ; and as he was quick and anxious to learn, he had made the best use of what his mother had taught him, and often read to himself for hours together. These few advantages had been, of God's mercy, much blessed to Joseph Rogers ; and from his regular habit of praying night and morning, he had learned to fear God's commandments, and to have a sense of His presence, which made him kind and obedient. He had often been struck with passages of Scripture which spoke of

the duty of children ; and he had been led, from them, to fear to disobey. There is no doubt some children are mercifully led, by God's grace, to serve Him, even when they have been as much neglected as the boy of whom I am speaking. It is, of course, no excuse for neglecting a child ; because it seldom happens, and when it does, it is not what we have had a right to expect. But so it was with Joseph. When his father would let him, he was always at church, whether on Sundays or week-days. Susan was fond of her boy ; and though she was too indolent to go herself to church, she was always glad he should go. She thought *she* had excuse enough for staying at home, from the fact of her husband showing a dislike to her going. She forgot, or tried to forget, that his dislike had been created by her own folly,—as she used to go to church, and always made a point, on those days, of paying less attention to her husband's wants and wishes ; making out that attendance in God's house was a sufficiently good reason for neglecting all the duties of domestic life. Of course, God did not bless such conduct, and she soon gave up going at all, because she feared her husband. True, he was violent, but it was more than half her own fault. Joseph, poor boy, was often treated with unkindness by his father for his attention to his religious duties. But

he bore it quietly ; and when he saw it particularly irritated his father, he would stay at home, and not go. Hard as he was, Rogers could not help admiring his boy, and sometimes almost loving him. Joseph's considerate, gentle obedience was doing more to reclaim Rogers than his wife's open and constant opposition. He certainly was the comfort of both, when either would take comfort. He often sat and watched his mother cry, with sorrow, and would cry too for her sake, and ask what he could do to help her. He scarcely ever left her side. He often bore the blows himself which Rogers meant for his wife ; and would take the children out of the way when he saw his parent out of temper. Joseph could not help seeing his parents' faults, for he was growing up ; but he never lost his respect and affection for them. He knew well all his mother's feelings, and would often be ready with words to comfort her, and anticipate her wants by his ready activity. When his father came home late, perhaps past midnight, it was always Joseph who sat up for him, to prevent his giving way to anger or violence at finding his wife gone to bed, and the house shut up ; and many have been the hard blows and cruel words I have known poor Joseph receive from him for his long watching at night. " But it will save mother—poor mother!" he

would think, and that was his comfort. He would keep up the dying fire for his father, and hide his own share of food to keep for his father when he returned at night, because he knew his mother would provide none. Poor Joseph! I can fancy now I see his blue eye and light hair, which always curled upon his forehead, as he would meet me in the lane and ask me to come and see his mother, or would answer some question I might put to him in passing. I have often seen him toiling home late in the summer's evening, laden with broken wood, carrying one of his little sisters on his back, and leading another by the hand, after he had been all day employed in the woods, to try and ease his mother, and provide for his father's wants. There was always a peculiarly sweet expression about his face, that won my attention. The pretty green lane where he used to climb the hedge to gather wild flowers for his little brothers often recalls him to my mind, and seems to speak of Joseph Rogers.

It was a dark summer's night, and the weather had been sultry all day, threatening a storm. Joseph had, as usual, been working hard for his mother, and taking care of the children. The evening had quickly closed in, and Rogers, as usual, was not returned from his work. It was harvest time, and he was employed in reaping.

He was often tired with his work, and returned home drunk. He had been worse than usual lately, and brought home but little for his wife and children. They were almost starving from want: the door of the cottage stood open; the dull quiet twilight had sunk on the shelves and broken furniture of the little cottage; and the heavy thunder-clouds were rolling on along the hill-side. Joseph stood at the doorway; his mother was out.—“It is a dark night, and the thunder's getting loud, Jem,” said Joseph to his little brother; “you mind the children, and I'll go and meet mother.” Jemmy took his place; and Joseph ran off down the lane, and over the fields along the way his mother had gone. The lightning became more vivid every moment, and the thunder pealed loud in the distance. The boy had to run a long way before he met his mother. He saw her figure at last, leaning against a style at the end of a field. “Mother, mo—ther,” cried Joseph, “are you ill? I came to meet you. The storm gets bad!” Susan gave no answer:—by this time he had reached her. “What's the matter, mother—“dear mother? Let me carry the sticks, “and you go quickly home—I'll follow—do “go, mother. The storm will soon be so “bad: and then, you are afraid of the “thunder. I left 'em all at home; and

"they'll be terrified alone." His mother looked up; she was pale and frightened. "Oh, Joe, Joe," said she, you are a good boy to your poor mother. I don't know where I should be without you. No, no, boy—you go home. I can't leave you alone in these fields, at this dark hour: never mind me: it don't matter much what becomes of me now. No, no." Joseph was used to expressions like these from his mother, but he saw there was something peculiarly wild and sad about her tonight—and he could not leave her. "What has happened, mother?—do tell me." But finding he got no answer to his question, he again asked her to go home, and let him follow. She gave in at last, when he reminded her of the children being all alone; and Joseph, taking up the large, heavy bundle of sticks, prepared to follow. It was very heavy, and he could walk but slowly. He watched his mother's trembling figure go quickly over the field, and cried to himself, when he saw how ill and frightened she looked: "Poor dear mother! it's very sad to see her so. She looks so bad—I wish she'd tell me what it is. I'd do anything for her I could. All that I can do is to mind her, and watch her, and take trouble off her hands. Pray God help me to do it!"—So Joseph thought to himself as he

toiled along over the fields. Susan's figure was now out of sight, and the rain began to fall fast and heavy. The lightning became awfully vivid; and Joseph felt afraid. He was quite wet through and worn out before he reached home; and could scarcely speak when he went in. His mother was leaning with her head and arms over a table; the children were gone to bed. She looked up as Joseph entered:—"Joe, is it you?" "Yes, mother," said the boy. "Oh! you're my dear, dear boy," said his mother, throwing her arms round his neck; "what should I do with you!"—"What is it that's the matter, dear mother? do tell me—at least, if you will." Joseph could not get much from his mother. He heard afterwards she had been out later than usual, and happening to meet her husband returning home drunk, she had reproached him for his cruel conduct to her and her children; and he had struck her severely. He had used unusually severe language to her, and she, being worn out with want and sorrow, had sunk under it more than usual. She was broken-hearted; and had stopped by the style, almost wishing she might die by the storm, and meditating destruction to herself, when the sound of Joseph's voice, and his kind, attentive affection, called her back to better feelings. "I will stop up for father," said Joseph to his

mother; you are tired and worn—you go to “ bed, mother; do go; you want rest.”—“ No, no; what’s the use of my life, Joe? “ I’ll try to let him kill me if he will. It’ll “ never be too soon.” With much earnest entreaty Joe did persuade her to go; but he saw she was very faint. “ You have had no “ food all day, mother, you’re faint from “ want — here’s some bread; do eat it, “ and try to rest: do, for my sake, mother!” “ Where did the bread come from?” said Susan, looking at it with suspicion, knowing there had been none in the house these three days. “ Never mind that, mother dear, it’s “ honest bread—that’s all.” The colour came over the boy’s face. It was his own share of bread for three days which he had laid by for his mother. But he would not tell her. She guessed it, and the tears came into her eyes.

Joseph was left alone in the lower room of the miserable cottage. He scraped together the dying embers, and sat waiting for his father. It was past two, and the storm had much abated; but it was very dark. He listened to every sound. He knew his father would come in very drunk; he always did if he was so late at harvest time; and Joseph got every thing he could think of to meet his father’s wants when he should return. All was silent up stairs; so he hoped his

mother was asleep. He listened at the foot of the stairs, and was very glad when he thought she was at rest. "Poor mother!" said he, with a sigh. Joseph was a ragged, tired, hungry boy, as he sat leaning over the fire. He had no comforts—yet there were few boys in the village that night so happy as Joseph Rogers. He heard footsteps approach the house. He knew it was his father's step: he listened a while longer, but they seemed to have gone again. He half opened the door, but saw no one. It was very strange: "It certainly was father's 'step.'" The boy went out into the lane, leaving the door open: he was startled by a loud scream: it seemed to come from his mother's room: he ran back to the cottage: and heard loud screams and struggling up stairs: he ran up, and found his father getting through a window with a large knife in his hand: his mother was holding her baby in her arms closely, and crying out for help. Rogers had expected to find the door of his house locked against him as usual; and coming home more drunk and irritated than ever, he had crept round the house, and climbed up to the window. Susan was not asleep, though Joseph thought she was; she saw Rogers's shadow on the roof, and starting up, fastened the window down. Rogers saw her, and being infuriated, burst it open,

and was now descending upon the floor, swearing he would kill his wife. Susan was lying screaming in bed, holding her baby close to her bosom:—"Oh, father, father!" cried Joseph, rushing towards him; "mind what you do: in the name of the good God, don't harm mother!"—"Hold back, boy!" said Rogers, seizing him by the hair, and dashing him from him. "You're always in my way: why do you come here with your cant?" The force of his father's arm threw Joseph against the corner of the bed, and hurt him severely. "There; you see what you've done," said Susan; "you've killed your own dear boy; him who never did you harm; him as was always so good and kind." She forgot her own fear for the time, when she saw Joseph all over blood. Rogers was stopped for the moment; and Susan darted down the narrow stairs: Rogers followed her closely. Joseph had recovered himself enough to rush between them; and held up his arm to receive the blow which his father aimed at his wife with the knife he had with him. It was a hard blow; and made a deep, horrid cut in Joseph's arm. The knife flew from him, and struck the child in Susan's arms: the blood flowed quickly from Joseph, and he was fainting with weakness. Rogers was staggered at the sight of what he had done: he drew back.

Susan continued screaming and holding out her baby towards her husband, reproaching him with all bitterness for what he had done. Joseph had strength enough to rise and open the cottage door : he led his mother out and down the lane. He took her into another cottage, and left her there with the baby, while he returned to his father. The lane was now in a state of alarm. The people came running down to Rogers's cottage. Rogers stood leaning, like one aghast, against the window. He had come to himself, yet not enough to have any clear recollection of what had passed. He could give no answer to the people who ran in. The children were screaming with terror in the upper room—Joseph came in pale and bleeding. The first thing that he saw, was his father being taken by a man of a neighbouring cottage : it struck him at once that his father might suffer for this night's dreadful work, and he forgot every thing else—he only thought of his father. “Oh, don't take him ! don't take “him ! It was half my fault—I ought to “have watched more for his coming back. “Do leave father here ! Let me go, and “leave him !” But words, of course, were vain ; and, faint with loss of blood, he sunk down on the floor senseless. Before he recovered, his father was in custody, and taken before a magistrate. Poor Joseph's first

thought on recovering was of his mother. He asked anxiously after her, and would scarcely be persuaded not to go down the lane again, to break to her the sad news of his father's being taken. The neighbours saw how faint the boy was, and prevented him going. Susan soon heard the report of her husband's capture, and came back hurriedly to her house. Susan had always complained of her husband, and made his home wretched; but she had sufficient love for him to feel deeply for his wretched case, and soon forgot his unkind treatment in his misfortune. It is very often the case that much real affection lies hidden under a fretful, murmuring disposition; such was Susan. Her chief thought now was how to help her husband. This became a still more anxious matter to her, when she heard it whispered among her neighbours, that, if the child died in consequence of the injury it had received, it would cost her husband's life. It was severely hurt, and lay, in a most doubtful state, in the cottage below.

Meantime Rogers was committed for his trial. He refused to answer any questions from the magistrate. He was sullen and silent. He was heard to mutter some oaths, as he was led away, and threats against his wretched wife, if ever he returned.

The child did recover, and Rogers's sen-

tence was six months' imprisonment. Susan was restored to her cottage, and Joseph was slowly recovering from his injuries. He was his mother's greatest comfort; always kind and obedient. He never ceased to think of her wants, and supply them, before she mentioned them; but he never looked well. His face was sometimes flushed, which gave it a peculiar brightness, but seemed to speak of slowly advancing illness. One could scarcely look at his bright, clear, blue eye, and the beautiful glow on his cheek, without seeing that poor Joseph was marked out for an early death. He had always been a delicate child, and his father's cruel conduct had much injured his health and strength. There was greater quietness in Susan's cottage than there had been for many a day. Her habit of dirt and indolence had so grown and fixed on her, as to make it a hard matter for her to break through it, even if she had had the inclination; but still there was peace and quiet. Joseph was all to his mother that a boy could be, and she delighted to nurse him. She would often watch his pale sickly face, as the flush of fever left it, and the tears would steal down her cheek when she thought of what "she should do if Joseph "died." They lived on a small allowance made them by the parish. She often thought of her husband, and felt quite willing to for-

give and forget all; yet she dreaded his return; she feared his threats; and as the six months wore away, she grew more and more anxious.

It was at this time that Joseph determined to visit his father in prison; he hoped to be able to persuade him to be kinder to his mother when he came back, than he had threatened. His mother did not like his going, as it was a long walk, and he must walk if he went at all. But she did not like to prevent him, when she saw his heart was set upon it. It was a long way for the boy, especially in his weak state. He reached the prison, and saw his father, who was confined among other prisoners who had been committed for small offences. He was sitting sullenly and idly with his head between his hands, and so did not see his boy enter. There were other prisoners there; all, for the most part, seemed equally listlessly engaged as Rogers. Poor Joseph passed, half frightened, among them all, up to the part where his father was. It was a day for "seeing friends," so it was nothing strange to see the boy come in. Badly as Joseph had been brought up, he had always had a dread of a prison, and he shrunk back from the sad sight of men who were all suffering for crime. He was surprised to see how pert and careless the other friends were who came

to see the prisoners, and was glad to reach his father. "Father!" said Joseph, laying his hand on Rogers, "father, I'm come to bring you something from mother, and to ask how you are, and to say mother's sad and sorry for the past; and she often sits and cries, father, when she thinks of you in the prison; and she bids me say she hopes you'll be good to her when you come back."

Rogers never took his eyes off the ground while his boy was speaking; and scarcely looking up when he had done, only said, "We'll see about that, Joe!" There was something very cruel in his look and voice, which frightened Joseph, and he did not know what to say. "Oh, father, father, don't look so! Mother does love you, and she's often frightened to think maybe you'll be angry when you come back; but she always said it wasn't her that got you taken." "—I'll have no more of your talk, so begone, boy! If she didn't have me taken, who was it?"—"It was all my fault, father, because I was not back in time to stop it. Be angry with me, but spare mother! Do, dear father—do! for she's thin and pale now-a-days. Oh, father, father, do mind me!" said the poor boy, clinging close to his father's arm, while he spoke with an earnestness which made the other prisoners turn round. "Be off, boy!" said Rogers,

shaking his son violently from him, “ I tell
“ you I’ll do as I have said ; there shall be
“ blood—yes, blood ! and I’ve passed my
“ word.” Joseph turned deadly pale at these
terrible words, and at his father’s fierce
anger. “ Oh, no, no ! in the name of the
“ good God who loves us, don’t say so, father.
“ Think of mother—think of her and them
“ all at home. She’s so ill, with thinking of
“ you. Poor dear mother, it ’ll break her
“ heart to hear you said so.” But it was of
no use talking, Rogers would say nothing.
He kept up a sullen silence, and poor Joseph
sorrowfully left the prison. His heart was
breaking ; he did love his mother, and had
taken a long walk for her sake. He had
hoped he might bring back better news. He
knew she expected he would, and would
make him tell her all when he got home.
Susan was waiting at her cottage door, with
the children, when Joseph returned. She
was watching for her boy. “ Here’s Joe ! ”
cried the little children, glad to see him
coming home ; and his mother ran on to
meet him. Poor Joseph *could* not tell her
his sad story, but burst into tears.

The rumour soon spread in the village of
Rogers’s cruel conduct ; and poor Susan
dreaded his coming home each day. She ex-
pected the worst. She knew how revengeful
he was. The neighbours were very kind,

but she knew not what to do. Joseph did all he could to comfort her. He was really striving to please and serve God. He never neglected his prayers to God for grace to do His will ; and God did help him with the gift of His holy Spirit. They that seek Him shall find Him ; and when a young boy, like Joseph, strives to seek God's help, and do His will, he will find help abundantly.

He was a sickly lad, and often thought of the great judgment day, when he should appear before God ; and this made him daily think how he should live to please Him. If Susan, instead of fretting herself to death with her trials, had made the same use of religion that Joseph did, she would have been a much happier woman under all her miseries. At length the time came for Rogers to return. Susan had got leave to occupy a barn belonging to a farmer, a mile or more from her home. It was Joseph's thought ; and she was to live there, while he stayed at home to supply his father's wants. He was to watch his father narrowly, and when he perceived a kindlier feeling in him towards his mother, he was to fetch her back. Susan took her baby with her, and left the other children at home.

Rogers returned, and Joseph waited on him. He was gloomy and silent, and very cross to his son. But Joseph did all he could.

He thought of his every want, and did every thing Susan could have done, had she remained at home. It was beautiful to see him going backwards and forwards from his father to his mother, trying to bring peace about between them. We know that "peace-makers" are blessed," and so Joseph found. After a fortnight Rogers for the first time asked for his wife. He had never mentioned her name before; he had taken no notice of his children, who were all afraid of him, and kept away. He seldom spoke to Joseph, and when he did it was very harshly. When he asked for his wife, Joseph's heart beat high with hope. He asked for her kindly, too, as if he would be at peace with her. Joseph scarcely dared answer his father's question, and was sadly perplexed. "Tell "me, boy, where's your mother? you know, "so tell me."—"Oh, father, don't hurt her, "and I'll tell you all! Don't talk as you "did in the prison yonder, for poor mother "does love you, though you won't think "it. Do forgive her, father! do forgive "and forget, for my sake—for mother's sake—"for your own sake, father." Rogers looked confused while his boy spoke to him; he answered, quite softened, "Well, Joe, if you "are not a good boy, I never saw one yet; "I won't hurt your mother—go and tell her "so, and bring her home; and you've done

" a good act in bringing together father and
" mother. Bad as I've been, Joe, I've always
" loved you, though I hav'n't shown it; and
" I always will, too: you shan't want a bit
" while I can give it you, or I am not John
" Rogers!"—"Oh, thank the good God for
" this!" said poor Joseph, as he ran along to
fetch his mother home. It was a happy
evening to him, when they were all together
again. His mother's pale face looked brighter
than it had done for many a long day. He
scarcely knew how to thank God enough for
his great mercy.

Rogers was strangely altered by his late
troubles. I shall always think, that, by God's
blessing, Joseph's conduct towards his parents
was the human means of working the change
in him. It shows us what a boy can do,
who strives to be obedient, and "to honour
" and succour his father and mother."

Some seem to think that their duty to
their parents ceases when they have grown
up. They forget the example of our Lord,
Who not only as a child was subject to His
Blessed Mother, but even when a man, hang-
ing in his last hour on the Cross, His chief
earthly thought was still on her.

It is a sad thing to see an aged parent,
who has borne for us the toils of a hard life,
and watched us through many hours of sick-

ness and weakness, past by in their old age, and grudged the little food which they cannot earn themselves ; while the wants and comforts of children are considered before theirs. We do see such sights, sometimes. We do sometimes go to a cottage where we see the old father and mother sit neglected in a corner by the very children for whom they have nearly sacrificed life itself ; or what is worse still, sometimes sent to pine out their last hours in the cheerless wretched solitude of the parish union. Where such is the case, there cannot be a high sense of duty to God. The first of christian duties towards our neighbour is respect and obedience towards a parent.

The Rogerses soon after this left my parish, and took a cottage in a neighbouring village, where they are now living. Rogers certainly did act better for some time, and he and his wife came to church frequently, and peace and quietness seemed for a while to make their home happy. Joseph, poor boy, was happy to see it all, and thanked God from his heart for these bright days. But I fear Rogers's change was not sufficiently fixed on a real wish and determination to serve God, and do his duty to Him. From what I have seen of him, I fear he does not think of striving to obtain the aid of God's Holy

Spirit, by prayer, Who can alone enable him to abstain from his bad habits. From what I have heard since, I fear he is not going on well. Susan I sometimes see, coming back to her old haunts. She always looks dirty and unhappy. It is very, very hard to break through an old habit, which, like hers, has been formed for years. When a person has long indulged such indolent habits, it is very difficult to overcome them. Of course, it can be done, and God will help us to do it ; "His grace is sufficient for us" under all circumstances.

Joseph has left home; he is working elsewhere to earn his livelihood. He is a delicate boy, and, I think, will not live long. His mother frets sadly at his absence. She says she has no other comfort. When he comes to see her, he is gentle, kind, and affectionate as ever. He has always got something he has saved out of his wages, to give his mother: he tries to raise her spirits, and to urge her to be more active for the other children. She is better whenever he comes home; and Rogers, too, is never so "kind and comfortable-like,"—to use Susan's words, "as when he finds his "good Joseph sitting by the chimney "corner." It is a happy day to his brothers and sisters when "their kind Joseph comes

“ home.” He is happy, and will continue to be so. He tries to serve God, and to follow the footsteps of that Blessed Saviour, through whom alone he hopes to enter the rest provided for God’s people.



Page 19.

The Railroad Boy.

R. Lucy, Printer, Broad Street Hill.

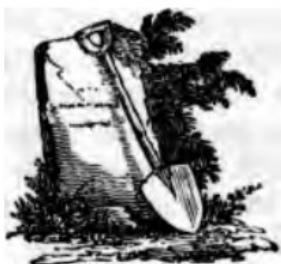


Page 7.

THE
RAIL-ROAD BOY:

A NARRATIVE

FOUNDED ON FACT.



LONDON :
JAMES BURNS, 17, PORTMAN STREET,
PORTMAN SQUARE.
1843.





THE RAIL-ROAD BOY.

IT was a bright, happy summer's evening, and I had just returned from visiting some cottagers at a distant part of my parish, through which one of the railways was being formed, when I was called by my servant to come and speak to an old man, who was waiting at my gate. I accordingly proceeded to the place where the aged person was standing. He was an old, and apparently distressed man, leaning one hand on a stick, while his body was bowed down with many years.

"For what did you want me, my friend?"

"Please your honour," said the aged man, "I came to ask you, if you would just step

"down, and see a poor lad, who lies in an
"unked state at my house yonder."

"And who is the boy?" — I was sorry
to hear of any one lying ill unknown
to me.

"He's none of mine," answered the man;
"he's one of they far country-folk who
"came to get work at the rail-road, and I
"took him in some weeks since for a lodger.
"He's a still, quiet boy as ever I saw, and a
"wonderful scholar too—and there he is, a
"praying like a minister all day and all night
"too."

"What is the matter with him?" said I,
beginning to think that the boy must be a
case needing some immediate attention.

"He was hurt on that there road-work,"
said the man. "God will never prosper
"such work as that, I think; common roads
"were made for men, and they should be
"content,—that's as I think, however."

"Well, my good man, I will be with you
"presently, and see the poor boy;" and
asking him the way to the cottage, I soon
proceeded to find out my new patient.

The evening was lovely;—the way lay
across the fields, the hedges of which were
filled with flowers of every description, which
sent up the most delicious scents on the
quiet evening air; the sun was within a few

minutes of sinking behind the blue hills, which bound, like a misty cloud, the distant view : all was still and beautiful.

The cottage stood alone in a narrow green lane, a few woodbines and roses hung in large clusters over the crazy doorway ; a little neglected garden, where a few pinks and sweet-williams were blowing among many weeds, led me to the entrance.

The cottage had been beautiful, but was neglected ; it was still fair to look upon. I lifted the latch and entered a low and dirty room, which bore every appearance of great poverty. The furniture was but little, and what there was, old and broken : the old man who came to me a little before, sat in a chair at the fire-side, with his pipe in his mouth.

"Well," I said, closing the door behind me, "and where is our patient?"

The old man gave no answer, but opening a door, which led to a little back room, introduced me to the presence of the sick boy, to whom I was called.

Often in succeeding years have I recalled that scene to my mind, and often have I turned my thoughts to the sad though blessed remembrance of the events of the succeeding weeks. O Lord, thy ways indeed are past finding out !

The brilliant beams of a now setting sun shone full into the room through the tangling boughs of a luxuriant woodbine, which covered the outside of the window. The almost empty casement stood open to admit the cool refreshing air of the summer evening. The fading light glowed on the hollow sunken face of a boy who lay on a bed, composed of straw and sackcloth, in a corner of the room. His pale and pain-worn features wore an expression of the most perfect peace, and his eyes gazed intently on the lovely scene from the little window, a nearer sight of which, it was clearly evident, he was never to see again. His face was very interesting, and bore the marks of having been handsome. His head rested on his hand, as I entered the room. He seemed in deep thought. The scene without, the ruddy light of the sunset sky, seemed to be in strange contrast with the sickly-looking boy who lay before me—and yet there was peace.

Oh that the sinner could know the peace, the real peace which Jesus gives; and could be persuaded, that the world, however gay, is, at the bottom, worse than nothing!

A minute passed before he seemed aware of my presence, and I stood to contemplate the peacefulness of his features, when these words escaped his lips.

"I thank thee, O my God!"

Something attracted his notice, and he looked round; a slight colour spread over his wasted features when he saw he was not alone.

"Oh, sir; I beg your pardon."

"For what, my dear boy?" I asked; "for being thankful?"—"No, sir," said he, "but "I did not know you were here; I was thinking of such sweet thoughts."

"And what were they?"—"Why, sir," he said, "I was thinking how that that sun "was fast setting, and bidding for a while "good bye to the world, and then I thought "how bright it seemed to shine, as if it were "glad to go; and I thought, though perhaps "it was wrong, that my sun was almost set, "and that I too was soon to say good bye "to this poor world—and then I felt so happy."

"And was that the reason you thanked "God, my boy?"—"Yes, sir."

"And why is it you are so happy? there "do not seem many of this world's comforts "about you?"—"Oh no," said the boy, his eye brightening up as he spoke it with an energy and earnestness I shall never forget; "it is "Jesus makes *me* happy."

Interested beyond measure in the boy, who seemed to be in so delightful a frame

of mind, I inquired of him the nature of his accident, and the probable hopes of his recovery. I discovered that he had received a severe accident on the railway, from a cart falling on his leg and side, which had broken several of his ribs, and severely injured some parts internally—his leg was also severely wounded: the injuries were of far too severe a nature to hope for recovery, and the medical man, who occasionally visited him, had long given him to understand the same truth.

"And how is it," continued I, anxious to carry on the conversation, "that you have become thus acquainted with Jesus Christ, "who seems to give you so much comfort, "when this world's concerns seem to be able "to give you so little?"

"I learnt to love him *here*," said the boy, —and drawing from his pillow of straw a little ragged, worn Bible, he placed it in my hand; the volume was indeed one which had seen better days, and seemed to have been well used.

"How did this Bible come into your possession?" I asked.

"The story is a curious one," he said, fixing his large sunken eyes full on me as he spoke; "it was God sent it me. It is now "two years since I lost my father and mother, "and was left an orphan in the world. I had

"no friend, no home that I could call my
"own ; a neighbour, a friend of my father's,
"had taken me in at the request of my parent,
"when he died ; but they were bad people,
"and I, hearing nothing of God, went on from
"bad to worse ; when one day, as I was idling
"away my time by a little brook which ran
"through a field in our village, a gentleman
"came by, and offered me a tract, asking me
"if I could read it. I told him I could a little,
"and took the tract : the gentleman passed on,
"and for want of better to do, I sat down and
"read it. I well remember that day ; it made
"me, for the first time in my life, have a
"serious thought. If this is true, thought I,
"I am in a bad way. God's Spirit was at work
"in my heart. I was determined to find out
"the gentleman who had given it me, if pos-
"sible ; and in order to do so, went to the same
"place day after day, hoping he might pass at
"the same time ; but day after day passed by,
"and he did not come. At last my wishes were
"answered, and he came. He stopped and
"spoke to me, and I told him my feelings. I
"will not keep you longer, sir, with my story.
"He saw me often after that, and told me of
"Jesus Christ, and taught me to love Him ;
"he gave me this little Bible, it was old when
"he gave it to me. Where the gentleman is, I
"do not know, for long after that, my relations,

“thinking I was old enough to work for myself, sent me to work on the railway. I left my own village and came this way, for the pay was higher: my little Bible was the only thing I could call my own—that I carried with me every where. For some time I continued going home at the end of a time; on seeing I was never welcomed, I soon left off, and began to look out for myself. It is now some weeks since I came here; I lodged with this old man because he lived further away from the rest of the men and boys on the work, and I wanted quiet to study my Bible and serve my God, and here, sir,” said he, turning and smiling on me, “here will be my last home in this poor world.”

“God has indeed dealt wonderfully with you, my poor lad. He has been faithful to his promise in your case, at least, and been a ‘Father to the fatherless.’”

“Oh, has he not, sir? When I look back from this sick bed upon the hours when I knew not God, and gave up my health and strength to pleasure and sin, I feel that I would not change my present lot to have years of that again.”

The exertion of speaking seemed too much for the poor sufferer, and as the sun had for some time sunk behind the hills, and the shadows of evening were drawing their curtain

over the sky, I thought it as well to be going ; I accordingly offered a few words of prayer by his bedside, and commanding him to the care of his heavenly Father, promised to see him in the morning, and returned home.

As I walked along beneath the clear starlight, the case of the boy was in my mind. How remarkable had his promise been shown in the case I had just left ! without one single advantage of education or instruction, his Saviour had met him and arrested him in his sinful course. Like the widow of Nain following her only son to the grave, so had this poor orphan been met by the Son of God, without having sought his mercy, or lifted one prayer to his throne.

On the following morning I fulfilled my promise, and visited my interesting patient early ; he was alone, for the old man had gone out upon his day's work. I passed through the outer room into the inner chamber ; he lay in nearly the same posture as that in which I had left him the evening before ; he was asleep, the Bible lay open by his side, apparently having fallen from his hand. The promise contained in the eleventh chapter of St. Matthew was the part on which his finger rested, " Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Poor sufferer, I thought,

as I looked on his flushed and smiling countenance, He must have given you rest, or such calmness could never comfort your worn-out features.

I sat down by his side till he awoke ; he seemed much pleased to see me. "I was "alone, sir, this morning, and fell asleep, I was "so tired : I never heard you come in."—"I "see you had been dwelling on the promises "of your Saviour when you fell asleep." "Yes," he answered, "they are very precious "to my soul ; but oh, I feel so worn out, I "have scarcely the power to keep my mind "on them ; my time, sir, I think, is very short "now, and *then*—" for a moment he stopped, "and then I shall fall asleep in Jesus." May he indeed grant it ! was my prayer.

I found he was undoubtedly worse since the day before ; his wounds shewed worse symptoms, and evidently needed more attention than he received from the medical man, who lived at some distance, and was attending him on the parish account. At his request I read to him, and talked some time, in order that he might not exhaust his frame by speaking much to me ; all he did say shewed a mind in such perfect peace, that I found myself likely to profit by my intercourse with him as much as he was likely to profit by anything I had said.

I left him, since I saw him inclined to sleep.

There is no need to be tedious in the detail of my daily visits to this poor, yet peaceful sufferer; each day his symptoms grew worse, his frame more wasted, and his spirit more worn, but daily grew in grace and peace as he approached nearer and nearer his closing scene.

In one of my visits I met the medical attendant who had come to him, but irregularly, from the first. He told me, what it needed little to discover, that his time was short on earth, and his symptoms of the worst description.

I felt gradually more interested in my young parishioner. I never remember to have seen one cloud darken his mind. His views of the atonement and the need of deep repentance were most clear, and his diffidence of self great; once only I found him in sorrow, the cause of which was connected with worldly circumstances, on which he bound me over to observe secrecy.

There is no need to give any more minute account of the history of my interviews with him, whose short annals I am recording.

It happened one morning, (it was only the evening before that I left my patient, as I thought, somewhat revived,) when my servant entered, telling me that the old man, whom

I have before referred to, had come, earnestly requesting my attendance, since the boy was dying.

Without delay I crossed, by the nearest foot-path, the fields which led to the solitary cottage, and reached it before the aged messenger, who had taken a more circuitous route, had arrived.

I passed into the inner chamber ; the curtain had been let down over the casement, to prevent the light annoying the dying sufferer, but I immediately knew, by the deep-drawn breath and the ominous rattle that attended it, that death was indeed not far off ; the precaution of the man had been ill-judged, since he had obstructed air as well as light ; the closeness of the room was oppressive, and I accordingly hastened to open the window, and to admit the fresh morning air, which, coming from a warm and sunny summer's day, had the immediate effect of refreshing the room, and reviving the dying boy.

I turned to look towards the bed ; by the help of the light that was admitted I was left no longer to doubt the message which I had received ; his large and glazing eye was fixed almost in vacancy, his head resting on the end of his pillow, and each breath growing deeper and more painful ; the admittance of the fresh air seemed to bring back the life

that had almost fled, his eyes became fixed on me, and with an expression of joy, as vivid as he was able to summon, he faltered out, "I am glad to see you, sir, very glad."

The contrast was striking indeed; the sweet refreshing beauty and life of the scene outside, glittering with sunshine, and enlivened by the songs of a hundred birds that caroled in the gladness of a summer's morning: within, the little chamber shewing every sign of poverty and neglect, the straw pallet in the corner, and the wasted features of the dying boy, who was stretched upon it. But there was something that bore resemblance to the brighter scene without—the thought that so soon a happy spirit should take its flight to glory.

I sat down by his side, and he stretched out his thin, white hand, already chill with the cold of death; I took it, and shuddered as I felt the feeble grasp his icy fingers strove to make on taking my hand.

"You are very bad, my poor boy."—"Yes, but very happy, sir."

"I am very glad," I said, "to be able to be a comfort to you in this last scene, and to commend your spirit to the God who gave it."—"Yes, sir, I have no parent to close my eyes when I am gone; and I thank

“ God he has sent me you—you have been
“ very kind to me, sir; very kind.”

I saw the exercise of speaking was far too great for him, and offered to read some hymns to him: he selected one, the first words of which he just mustered sufficient power to enunciate—

“ How sweet the name of Jesus sounds.”

I read to him the beautiful hymn beginning with those words, and when I came to the last verse he followed my voice in every word with an emphasis which surprised me.

“ Till then I would thy love proclaim,
“ With every fleeting breath;
“ And may the music of thy name
“ Refresh my soul in death.”

I asked him if there was nothing I could do for him when he was gone from this lower scene; and after a short pause, while his head rested on my shoulder, he made, in broken sentences, this request, which I give connectedly here.

“ There is, sir, one thing, and only one,
“ I would ask you to do when I am gone.
“ When my mother died, I had one little bro-
“ ther, many years younger than I; I used to
“ love him then as my play-fellow; he had
“ large blue eyes, and long fair hair; and when
“ my mother died, they came and took him to
“ the workhouse, and I saw no more of him;

" I then was bad and careless, and soon forgot
" him ; I have often thought of him since ; I
" do not know where he may be now ; he may
" be where they took him. I would ask you
" this one thing : take him this Bible, tell him
" I sent it him from my dying bed ; talk to
" him about Jesus Christ, and then tell him,
" sir," he continued, with an almost painful
earnestness, " tell him this was all I had to
" send him ; I have nothing else in the wide
" world I can call my own ; tell him I thought
" of him, I prayed for him in my last moments,
" I send him my blessing and a brother's
" love."

The exertion of this communication was too much for the dying boy, and he sunk back exhausted ; it had been too much for me too ; there was something so touching about it all, that for a few moments my feelings overpowered me, and there was a silence.

Death was rapidly approaching, the cold damp stood upon his forehead, and his hand became more chill, its grasp less firm.

The few words he did articulate were feeble, and seemed to require a painful effort ; his eye became more sunken, and his gaze more fixed on me ; his mortal scene had plainly well nigh past away ; he joined his hands together, and held them up as if to pray, but they sunk powerless on his bosom, and his

compressed lip shewed his desire. I strove to gratify it, and knelt at his bedside. I offered up a prayer for him, he still followed me, I could only tell it by the slight motion of the mouth.—A few moments after, he seemed to make one effort to say something, which required a struggle too painful; I placed my ear close to his face, I could then just discern the words, “The Lord shall reward you.”

He seemed to be anxious to thank me for my attendance on him; I pressed his cold hand, in order to assure him how delightful the work had been to me.

“ You die in full and humble trust on “Jesus Christ,” I said, speaking as clearly and distinctly as I could. His head slightly moved in assent, and a sweet smile played around his face. “ The cross of Christ,” I added, “ is your only hope of admittance “into heaven.”—He again strove to answer by his look, but the lamp flickered lower and lower, the flame was well nigh gone, his breath became scarcely audible, and as his worn-out face rested upon me, and I watched the sweet and perfect tranquillity which composed it, I thought I had never seen such a death as the closing scene of this friendless orphan.

The sun had by this time come round, and

shone in at the window; its first rays fell upon his face; he opened his large eyes, and fixed them on me with an expression of such love, and gratitude, and joy, that I never saw before; it was his last—one sigh, and his spirit went to God.

I laid his head upon the pillow, and crossed his poor wasted hands upon his breast; there was still sweetness, inexpressible sweetness there; life was gone—it was fixed in icy, marble stillness. I looked for some minutes, until I could bear the sight no longer: I sank on my knees by his side, and could almost fancy the being before me joined in my prayer; but no, it was intensely still, the spirit that just now spoke, was praising God in heaven.

There was something deeply touching in the scene around me, and I felt unwilling to leave the room; but it was growing late, and I thought it as well to go. Giving one more look at the placid countenance of him who now "slept in Jesus," I drew the door behind me, and left the chamber of death.

In the other apartment the old man was sitting in listless contemplation; he scarcely moved as I passed through. I did not feel very communicative at the moment, and simply said, "Our young friend is released "from his sufferings."

"A good thing too," was the only answer I got. "I hope the parish will bury their own dead."

Sickened at the cold remark, I promised to send a woman to lay out the body, and left the cottage.

How often had I trodden of late that pathway with feelings of such intense interest and delight! I now traced it for the last time on that errand: my footsteps had been ever urged on by the thought, "he whom thou lovest is sick;" but now the real truth was fulfilled, and my interesting parishioner "was dead," yet did it seem scarcely more than "a taking of rest in sleep."

There is a feeling too much approaching the romantic in such scenes as these; they make after events appear insipid—there is something of self in them; but they do not often happen, and when they do, a heavenly and ever-watchful Father will overrule them for good. I felt just then disconsolate and sad, and thought I could never feel the same interest in another dying scene: I felt as if I had lost a dear and near relation: but, O my Saviour, thou knowest the frailty of our human nature, and canst pardon and overrule the human frailties of thy people! A simple desire to do thy work should be our aim, and the aged and unfeeling man,

from whom I had turned sickened away, should have as near a place in my heart and prayers, as the dear and interesting sufferer who had just gone.

The week passed away—the many occupations of life did not serve to drive away for one half-hour the thought of that dying scene.

The following Sunday was fixed for his funeral. He was to be buried by the parish.

The afternoon service was over, and having taken off my gown, I walked slowly down the green lane that led to the cottage. It was a still, quiet afternoon: there was scarcely a breath of air, and the flowers were in full bloom; the scene around was beautifully still; the distant low of the cows, or the tinkling of the wether bell, were the chief sounds which were carried through the hot air—every now and then the deep hum of a bee or a summer fly passed swiftly by me. The damp rose in hot vapours from the ground, and the hills of the neighbouring country closed in the view; a few little children passed me on their way to the school, dressed in their clean Sunday clothes, and their school books wrapped in white handkerchiefs in their hands; they curtsied as they passed, and their childish conversation for a moment stopped; the sound of

their feet was soon lost in the many windings of the lane, and I was again alone.

The church bell had been tolling slowly for some time, and its solemn sound reached me at intervals—a remarkable contrast with the distant sound of the children's voices. There was grave and gay, life full of hope, full of energy, and death, to the eye of faith, more full of hope still. It grew late, and I sat down under the shade of an oak tree which overhung the gate of a field, from which I had a view of my church: the scene was very lovely, and I scarcely felt to care how long they were coming up. A boy or two, taking their walk with a bunch of sweet-williams or southern-wood in their hands, passed and looked at me as they went, when at length the sound of voices in the distance broke upon my ear: I walked on, and presently in a winding of the lane saw the funeral coming, if at least it might be called by such a name. Four men carelessly and hurriedly carried the rough coffin, which contained the remains of him whose name almost seemed sacred to me: there were no followers; he had none to care enough for him; he was an orphan; but it mattered not to him. I could, however, scarcely think that that narrow home, brought along *in such a manner*, did indeed contain his

remains ; that under that lid, the sweet and placid countenance, the wasted form, over which I had so often bent, was stretched. I had seen him the evening he was placed in the coffin, and even then I scarcely could have thought him dead. A few village children on their way to school, had gathered in behind the bearers, and ran along with the quickly moving procession ; it was a parish funeral, and seemed to deserve from them less regard than usual.

I walked quickly to the church-yard, and met the body at the gate as they entered. The corpse was lowered : the dust rattled hollow on the coffin-lid ; the children gazed into the grave, and ran on to school ; the service was over, and the bearers gone from the church-yard. I left the sexton to fill in the grave. By the time I returned all was again quiet ; no human being broke in on the perfect solitude of the church-yard ; there was something in the silence more in keeping with my own feelings, than the heartless and professional carelessness of the officiators at a parish funeral. I sat by the grave till the bell rang for evening service.

Often afterwards have I resorted to the spot. The grave is now green ; it lies unnoticed by the passing traveller, as possessing nothing more to attract notice above the rest.

of the graves ; it lies in a sweetly retired corner, devoted to the repose of those who are buried on the parish account. I have often sat there, and, perhaps, often shall ; it recalls feelings I would not lose for worlds.

That grave contains one whose closing scenes are too deeply and too vividly impressed on my mind for me to lose them.

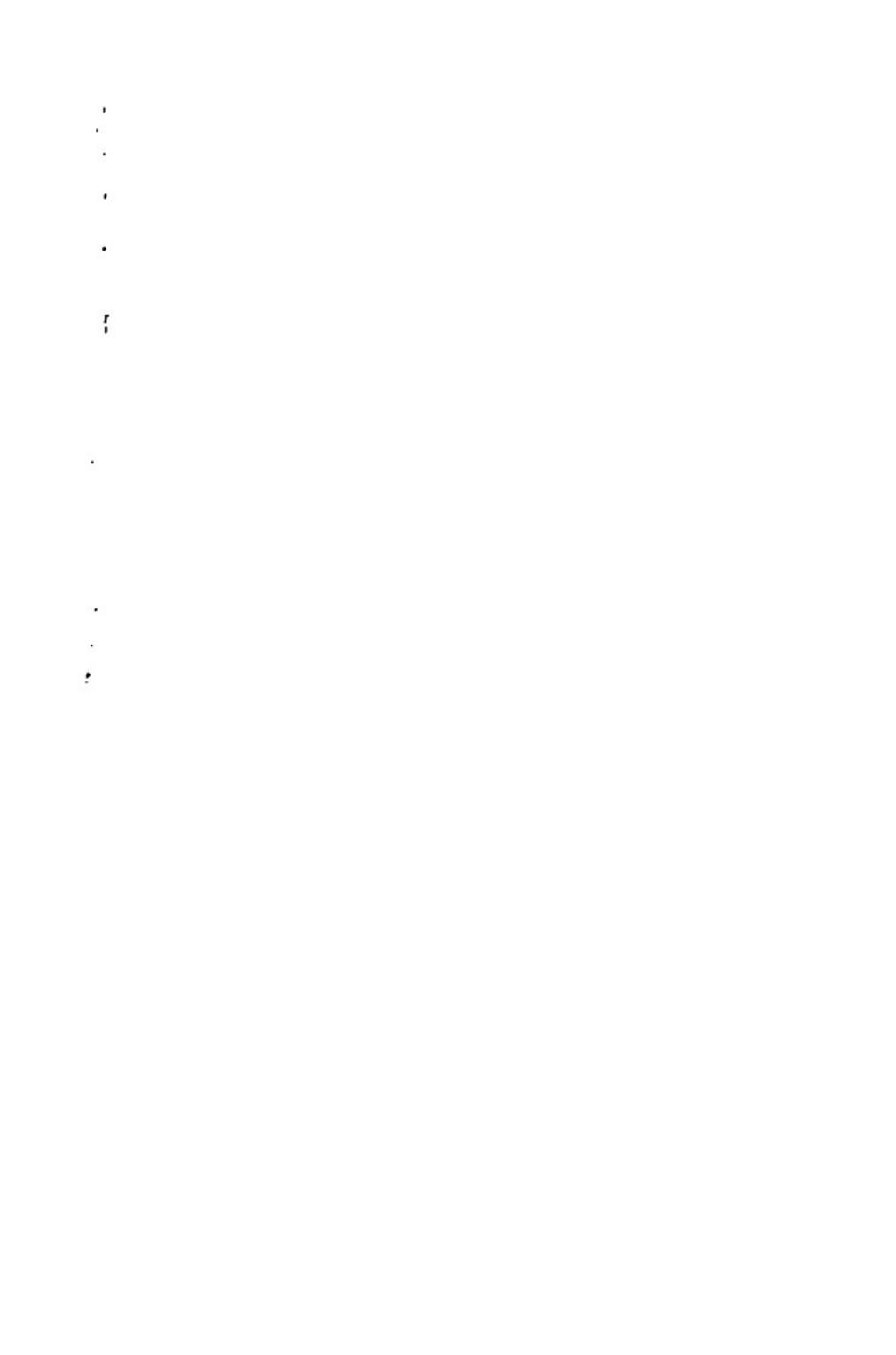
I have sometimes visited the old man since ; he has never yet had another lodger, and the straw bed lies where it did in the little inner room. When I enter it, I can almost fancy I see *his* dying eyes fixed on me ; but no, he has passed to a better world ; the woodbine still tangles at the window, and the roses blossom at the porch. I love to visit the room and the parish grave ; they seem almost to speak to me of the *Rail-Road Boy*.

Such is my story, and I must, in concluding it, beg my reader to pardon me for my placing before them a tale so little full of incident to the passing world ; my own feelings may have magnified its interest. I trust, however, with God's help, it may have its use, however small : it is with sincere wishes and intentions I have placed it before the notice of other eyes. It may serve to show the power of God's grace—the blessings of a *Christian's* death-bed,—and may also shew,

that amid the most neglected and unnoticed members of society, the workmen employed on our rail-roads, there may be many a sheep belonging to the Fold of Christ.

May God grant that if but to one, and *that* a child,—“ he being dead may yet “speak!”









ANNIE'S GRAVE.

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TRUE

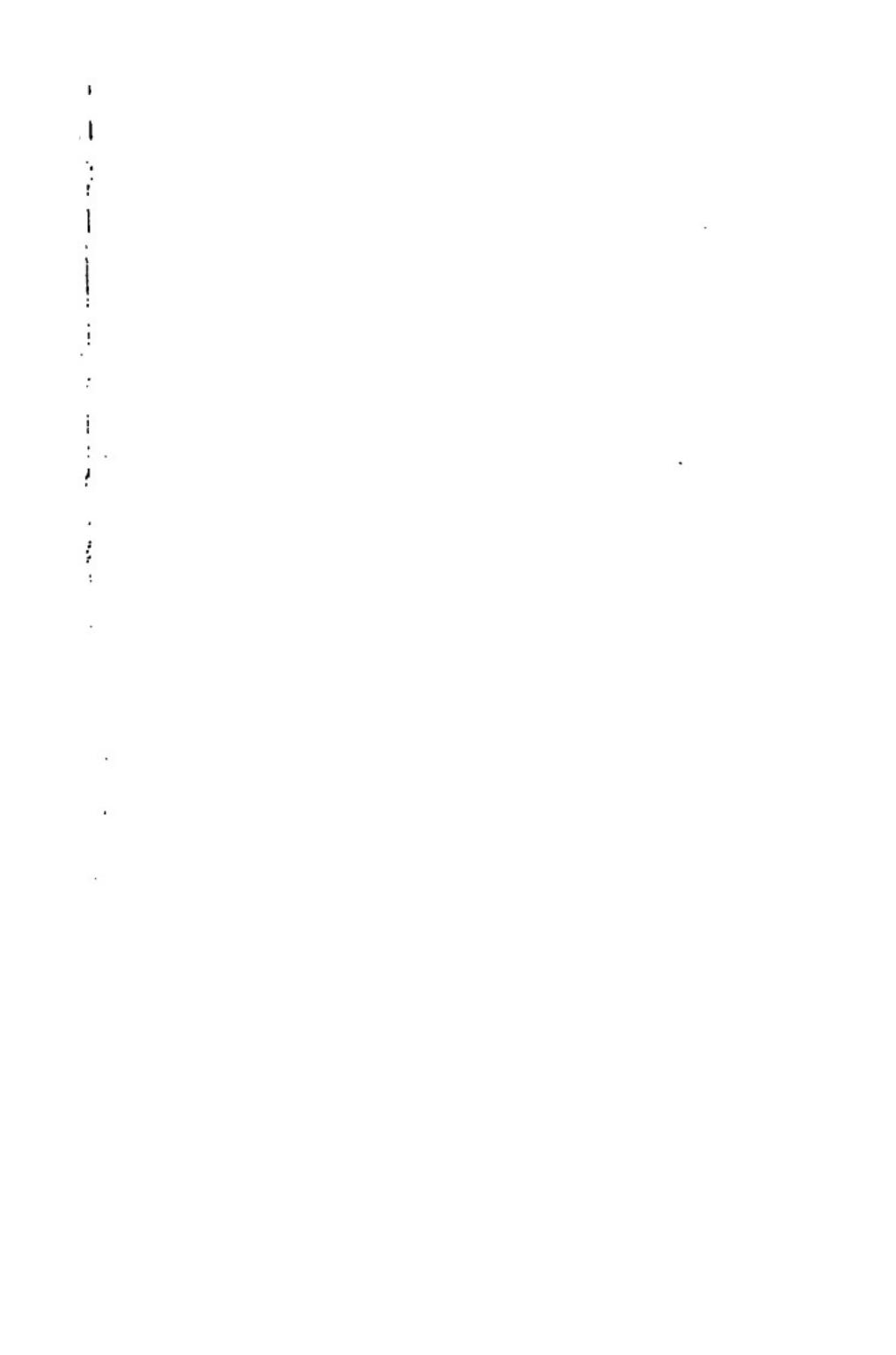
Stories of Cottagers.

ANNIE'S GRAVE.



LONDON :
JAMES BURNS, 17, PORTMAN STREET,
PORTMAN SQUARE.

1843.





Annie's Grave.

THE sun was beginning to sink, towards the middle of a June afternoon, and groups of little village children had gathered with idle curiosity about a new dug grave in the churchyard ; a few stragglers lingered at the gate ; and others, too young even to feel curiosity at the scene of death, were plucking blue-bells and pansies in the hedge. It was a very beautiful churchyard. Hills rose around it, covered with fields, and a wood lay beyond them in the far distance.

“ ‘Tis a little grave, Nanny, a very little

“God he has sent me you—you have been
“very kind to me, sir; very kind.”

I saw the exercise of speaking was far too great for him, and offered to read some hymns to him: he selected one, the first words of which he just mustered sufficient power to enunciate—

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I read to him the beautiful hymn beginning with those words, and when I came to the last verse he followed my voice in every word with an emphasis which surprised me.

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I asked him if there was nothing I could do for him when he was gone from this lower scene; and after a short pause, while his head rested on my shoulder, he made, in broken sentences, this request, which I give connectedly here.

“There is, sir, one thing, and only one,
“I would ask you to do when I am gone.
“When my mother died, I had one little brother, many years younger than I; I used to love him then as my play-fellow; he had large blue eyes, and long fair hair; and when my mother died, they came and took him to the workhouse, and I saw no more of him;

"I then was bad and careless, and soon forgot
"him ; I have often thought of him since ; I
"do not know where he may be now ; he may
"be where they took him. I would ask you
"this one thing : take him this Bible, tell him
"I sent it him from my dying bed ; talk to
"him about Jesus Christ, and then tell him,
"sir," he continued, with an almost painful
earnestness, "tell him this was all I had to
"send him ; I have nothing else in the wide
"world I can call my own ; tell him I thought
"of him, I prayed for him in my last moments,
"I send him my blessing and a brother's
"love."

The exertion of this communication was too much for the dying boy, and he sunk back exhausted ; it had been too much for me too ; there was something so touching about it all, that for a few moments my feelings overpowered me, and there was a silence.

Death was rapidly approaching, the cold damp stood upon his forehead, and his hand became more chill, its grasp less firm.

The few words he did articulate were feeble, and seemed to require a painful effort ; his eye became more sunken, and his gaze more fixed on me ; his mortal scene had plainly well nigh past away ; he joined his hands together, and held them up as if to pray, but *they sunk powerless on his bosom, and his*

Annie. But all was gone now, and they felt very solitary. Wilson had been ill for sometime; indeed, he had never been well since he was married. He had been a tall striking-looking man, and remarkable for his strength; but illness had laid him low, and reduced him to great poverty. His wife had been better off, but had seen many a day's want since her marriage. Sickness had increased her difficulties in striving to provide for his wants. It was a few months before this funeral I have mentioned, that I was first asked to visit Wilson, who lay at the time dangerously ill. The cottage was old and almost falling to pieces, it bore every mark of extreme poverty; a child was playing in the lower room, and the mother, who bore strongly the marks of care and want, directed me up stairs. Wilson lay on a low bed, with his head raised on his arm; his face was thin and wasted, and a deep hollow cough, which continued incessantly, marked his illness to be consumption. He seemed to have nearly run out his term of days; and want and sorrow were hastening his end.

He seemed a man of considerable intelligence and much warm feeling. He knew but little of religion, but seemed most willing to be instructed, so much so that I continued to visit him daily, and found a great improvement in him in the course of the following

winter. His mind, by degrees, became quite taken up with the thought of holier things, and desire to live a better life if God spared him; and though he seldom left the little bed on which I first found him, and to which from his great weakness he was confined, he sometimes came down stairs, on which occasions I always found him, with his little girl in his arms and his wife by his side, reading aloud the bible. He had few temptations from without to draw him aside, being unable to leave his cottage door; and the near approach of death, which seemed almost to be looking him in the face, cast an air of solemnity and sadness about his manner.

One thing particularly marked his conduct, his deep love for his little girl; she was a very lovely child, and loved him as deeply as he loved her; she scarcely ever left his knees, and I can almost now see her large blue eyes fixed on her father's pale wan face, as she would watch the tears which ran down upon his cheek, and which he often shed when he thought of leaving her, and the destitute state she and her mother would be in. She could never be happy till he had ceased to cry, and would begin to shed tears with him, as she nestled her baby face in his bosom; and she said, "If father cry, Annie cry too." He did love her; she was his great earthly comfort through his long

winter's illness, and many an hour would be wiled away by hearing her playful talk, or watching her grave attention when he talked to her of things she could scarcely understand. When he was in bed she would lie by his side ; when he was asleep she would sit by to startle the flies from his face, and would watch by him till sometimes her eye, worn out with watching, had closed in sleep, and her soft smiling cheek had sunk down upon her father's worn-out face ; and I have found them lying thus together when I have gone in, her face upon his, and her little white hand thrown round her father's neck.

Wilson was a man of deep tender feeling, and he clung to his little girl with a fondness which was almost painful, when one felt they would so soon part ;—but they were to part in a different manner from that which he expected.

Annie died first ; she sickened in spring, after her father had passed a long winter of suffering, through which she had been his chief comfort. She lay ill three weeks, and never left her cradle, which was kept by her father's side.

She died the beginning of May, and Wilson felt more desolate than ever, though his trial, without doubt, served to wean him from *the world*, and fix his thoughts more on God, whom he had been seeking.

On the day of her funeral the sun shone in full heat and beauty, and the whole village, with its lanes and hedge-rows, was gay and green with another spring. Early in the morning I had gone to Wilson's cottage, and finding the lower room empty, I went up stairs. He was alone; the coffin was by his side and lay open, and his head was resting against its edge. He did not move as I entered. The lovely form of his little Annie lay cold and placid before him; and the dim shadowy light which came through the curtain over the window added to the solemnity and sacredness of the scene. There was a wreath of blue-bells round her head, and some white flowers were thrown all over her shroud. Her cheek was slightly sunk in death, and I remember noticing a tear-drop which was lying on it, which had dropped from her father's eye. Poor Wilson! he had been out all the morning to gather the earliest flowers to deck her with before she was buried. He would not leave the corpse until it was quite time for it to be carried to its last home on earth; and it seemed as if it would have broken his heart as he leant against the door, and watched the coffin carried down his garden by the six children we have described in the beginning of the story. But it was a trial blest to him. He had deep feelings, and

they were all called out for his child ; and though for many a long summer evening he sat sad and unhappy by his garden gate, he was always struggling against discontent, and was ever ready to hear advice which might help him in serving God. There was certainly a great change in his whole life and state of mind since a few months before, when, as I could gather from all I heard, he had been the proudest man in the village, and remarkable for his drunkenness and unsteady conduct.

Annie had been buried some months, and the summer was fading into autumn, when I was able to place Wilson in a position of some importance and trust in the parish, from which he was able to earn a sufficient livelihood without farther injuring his health. For a while he continued thankful, calm, and contented, striving to serve God, and to bear the trials he had had with patience ; but after a while there was a change, a slow gradual change. He was occasionally absent from church, and when he was there his dress was above his station ; his manner careless and inattentive. He seemed less willing to ask advice on subjects of religion, and more inclined to excuse his faults.

When he did speak, he seemed to be strongly impressed with the importance of *still advancing* in good things, and showed

on all occasions great feeling on the subject of religion. For a few days, after a conversation when his faults had been placed before him, he was more watchful, but he by degrees began to depend too much on conversation to keep up his religious efforts. Our religion must depend more on sacraments and prayers,—less on the excitement often produced by intercourse with men.

Such changes were painful to watch. Wilson, I knew, was naturally proud; his religion had been too much one depending on feeling, and he was not able to stand against prosperity. He could endure adversity, for he had deep warm feelings; and indulging them when affliction offered opportunity, pleased him; days of success were different. He had begun to think that if he could cry at the death of his child, and long to be with her, it was a sign he was serving God from the heart. This is not all that is needful,—far from it.

I learnt that he had formed a small society among a few more steady men in the village, who met at his house to sing hymns in the evening, and he read aloud to them. I feared there was vanity mixed up with it all, and my fears were true. Singing hymns became amongst them a common occupation, carried on in a careless irreverent spirit, *when most out of season.* More than

once, by the influence of Wilson, the whole party were seen in the church of a neighbouring parish on Sunday, having gone there to display their own knowledge of singing hymns. All this was bad, and when at length a new attack on his lungs compelled him to give up his singing, he no longer felt any interest in the society of those whom he had called together, it showed but too plainly that vanity had been the cause of these exertions. The subject was religious, and he thought *he* was religious by employing himself on it. So by degrees he fell away from the path of right. He had mistaken the true use of trouble; he had thought it had done its work when it had made him *feel* the importance of religion—the shortness of life. This is *not* all its work, it must lead us to act also. From thus leaving off his attention to the external occasions of religion, Wilson went on to make it a mere tool for his vanity, and from that to almost giving up the profession altogether. Often and often has his wife come to me, with tears in her eyes, to beg me to speak to him, and try to bring him back to the feelings he once had, and which he had now so forsaken. Words *had* a great effect upon him. Perhaps those who are easily *worked* upon by words, and who need constantly that kind of outward support, are

the least satisfactory cases we have to do with. A mind stayed on the use of means which accustoms itself to find grace and encouragement often in the use of prayer and the holy communion, in the sweet calm of public worship, and the awful quiet of self-examination, will be in far more hopeful condition, though the feelings be less excited, and the hope less high, than the mind which always needs the persuasion of personal intercourse. I was at last compelled to deprive Wilson of the office in which I had placed him. His general character became conceited by it. Religion was daily receiving a blow in the village from his holding the place he did, whilst he made professions he so little acted up to. I had marked that he first began to fall away, rapidly away, from right conduct, when he ceased to be a communicant. By losing his place he was reduced to great poverty. He had now three children, and nothing to look to to support them. His feelings were strongly affected by the change; he seemed to "come to himself," and to compare his present state in the opinion of them about him with what he had thought of himself a few weeks before.

How humbled! How fallen! He thought of the past with bitterness, but it was not of sincere repentance; it was sorrow, but not

"Godly sorrow." He gave way to despair, and ceased to think of making an effort to serve God. This is generally the course of a religion of mere feeling. A man who has trusted to it fails in practice, and he finds but little to fall back on, and he despairs.

The evening was growing late, and Wilson's wife had been rocking their youngest child to sleep by her cottage door. It was a bright summer evening, and the stars were coming one by one in the deep blue heaven. She had been watching for more than two hours for her husband's return, but he had not come. She felt the more anxious because she knew he had left the house wretched and heartless at the state of want to which his conduct had reduced his wife and children. She listened to every sound, but he did not arrive.

The sound of the children's voices at play in the distant village had grown fainter and fainter as each little group retired to rest. A few stragglers were still shouting in the far distance; more than one silent bat had flapped its wings by her ear, when, taking up her child, she went towards the fields to which she thought he had gone.

It was difficult for her to make her way across the fields with her baby in her arms; *the grass* was long, and herself weak and *trembling* with fear. She reached a little

pond of water, and, quite exhausted with her fears and the weight of the child she was carrying, she sunk down upon the grass; the silence was deep all around her—she knew it was a frequent resort of her husband's, and often from her cottage window she had watched his steps as he took the way to the pond. It was always when he was most unhappy, and she watched him with great anxiety, she scarce knew why. The stillness was now awful to her feelings; she could not go home without him; she could not be in that silent home, waiting for his return, as she had done night after night already; she determined to stay where she was, till something should guide her way to her husband. She scarce knew what she expected would come, but still she could not go back without him. Her baby had fallen asleep upon her shoulder. "Poor 'baby!'" said she, "would that father 'would love you as he did his Annie. Poor, 'poor baby, and poor I!'" and as she said it, she burst into tears. She was startled by a sound within a few yards of her.

"Is that you, mother?" said Wilson, rising from the grass close to the water's edge, "Where am I! What have I done!" and as he spoke he rose and came towards his wife.

"Oh, father, how could you frighten me so? it is so cruel of you; why do you take

"these long walks alone at night, and leave
"me and my poor baby at home? Look at
"your little child, Wilson—do look at it,
"and think how you used to love Annie,
"and why don't you love this? Is it not
"your own child, Wilson? I say it is your
"own." So saying, she lifted up the sleep-
ing infant to its father's lips; he kissed its
half-closed mouth, and, turning away to wipe
off the tear from his eye, he led his wife
away. There were some minutes before
any thing was said by either; at last Wilson
spoke.

"Mother! I have done a fearful thing
"to-night; but by the good God's mercy!
"he saved me from it." He stopped again,
and his manner seemed desultory and wild.

"What is it you've done?" said his wife;
"tell me at once, and oh, don't make bad
"worse by keeping me in ignorance."

"Many and many's the night I've left
"home and walked over here to that water,
"and many's the time I've left the cottage
"door, and turned round as I shut it, to look
"for the last time, as I thought, on you and
"these little ones. How could I bear to hear
"them cry for food, and I hadn't got it to
"give them, and when it was all my fault
"they starved? God took my little Annie,
"*and I'm killing them.*" His voice choked
with tears; he could not say more.

"But tell me, father, tell me what it is
"you've done to-night?"

"I've killed 'em, I know I have," continued he, running on in the same wild strain; "I knew it when I heard 'em cry this morning for food; I could bear any thing, but "I can't bear that. You saw me go; you "didn't see me, though, look through the "little back window, to see them for the "last time—them as I'd loved so much; "you didn't see me cry like a child as I "turned away."

She answered nothing, for she had seen him do this; he never left her but that she watched him.

Wilson again paused. "Still it must "come out, must it? I didn't mean it should. "Well, then, I tell you, I've often come "here to this pond,—I mean, while the stars "were so cold, and I've sat there on the "bank of reeds; oh! I've sat there hour "after hour, looking and looking—"

"At what?" said his wife, anxiously.

"Why I couldn't do it; I tried, and I "couldn't; I always tried in vain; some- "thing always seemed to hold me back; "sometimes I thought I heard *them* call me."

"Do what?"

"Drown myself;" said Wilson, in a tone which made her blood creep. "Drown my- "self; why do you make me say the horrid

“word again?” Wilson turned round with a ghastly smile and look of horror to the water, which lay clear and cold beneath the starlight. His wife, trembling, tried to draw him on; but he would not move. He stood gazing on the pond. “I hate it; I hate to see it; no one knows what that pond is to me; I've been there for hours alone; I hate to see it, and yet I know I shall come back to-morrow, it is *my* place. These very reeds have been to me like my children, telling me to save my life.” His manner was so strange and wild that his wife was terrified more and more.

“Father, do please come—do come home; I'm very ill, and can't bear it any longer.” Saying this, she held the child towards him; he took it without speaking. The child looked up in its father's face and smiled, and a tear fell from Wilson's cheek upon his baby's face. He walked quietly home; his wife said she knew nothing would have brought him home but his child, it made him forget himself. He said no more that night. From what he afterwards told, it appeared that he had gone down that evening with the dreadful intention of drowning himself, and, lest he should fail in his intention, as he had done before, he prepared to do it at once, when he saw a labourer pass along the field; fearing he might be watched, he lay

down on the grass, intending to slip into the water, when he immediately fell asleep, and never woke till his wife found him as I have described above.

"I was quite determined, but God kept "me back."

"Oh, thank him a thousand times for "that!" said poor Mrs. Wilson, drawing her children around their father. They cried because their mother did.

"Why thank God, mother?" asked her little boy.

"Because he has saved father's life; for "that we have to thank God."

"Father, show me, and I will," said his child; "show me how to say my prayers.—Father—"

Wilson started up in an agony and rushed from the cottage.

It was indeed an act of a most merciful God to spare the barren fig-tree one year more.

Some time passed before Wilson returned; meantime his wife came to me to beg that I would come up that evening and speak to him, and warn him of his fearful state. "He "minds what you say, sir; and when you "speak to him about what he used to feel, "he always is better for it. It is not that "he does not feel that he goes on so, it is "that he feels so much."

"Yes, Mrs. Wilson," said I, "feelings have been his snare; he has trusted to them too much, and mistaken them for religion. God has given them to us to be a preparation to religion. Wilson is by nature proud—very proud; and while things happened which touched his feelings and did not hurt his pride, he went on well enough; but he has no real principle, and when his pride is injured, he falls back on his feelings, of a different kind, and these give him no happiness, because they give him nothing to support him against his offended pride. We must subdue our feelings, and be submissive to God's will, or they run away with us."

"Yes, sir, you say true enough," said the poor woman; "but still, sir, you did think he was good once; it wasn't all talk;" for she could not, spite of all his faults, lose the respect which she had always had for her husband; for then she used to be so proud of Wilson, and she could not bear to give him up."

"No, Mrs. Wilson," I said, "certainly not; I think his religious feelings at one time were very sincere, and he made great efforts to turn to God; but he did not go on—he did not go far enough. He did not advance to good things by using God's appointed Means; and having reached what

" was only the beginning of good things, he
" was satisfied all was right, and stopped
" there."

I promised to come in the evening. I found him at home; he was silent, and seemed to dislike my coming. I talked to him for some time. He said he was a wretched man; that he had been good once, and found all his religion fail him; and spoke in a despairing manner, almost amounting to blasphemy. It was sad indeed to hear a man all but blaming God for faults and frailties of which his own indolence in the use of means had so manifestly been the cause. After some conversation he seemed more touched and thoughtful, but he still despaired. He said God had forsaken him; he was not the man he was when his Annie died.

He tried to avoid me after this. He quite left off coming to church, and I heard occasionally from his wretched wife of the sad way he went on. He was generally kind to his family, and truly loved them;—he would have done any thing for them, but was too ill to work. By his own wayward act he had lost the only place to which he seemed now suited. His children were pale, and sickly, and squalid. He would wander for hours in the lanes, dragging his two youngest *children in a little cart, with his eldest boy*

by their side. He was very proud of the latter, and his presence always seemed more than any thing else to call him out of himself. His greatest dread always was the *parish*, and he often sat up whole nights to do trifling works of jobbing, or any little matter he could turn his hand to, to earn enough to keep his children from the parish. "I'd far sooner have my children die," he used to say, "than leave them to the power of a union master, and taken away from myself." But want pressed hard upon them by degrees, and Wilson set off one morning, with his little boy, to the Board, which was held at the Union Workhouse, to try to get relief. It was a hard struggle for his proud heart, and that heart so little subdued.

When he arrived there he was shown into a room where a number of persons were waiting to have their cases examined. Some were poor sick creatures, with their heads tied up with white handkerchiefs, and their sunk black eyes and sickly cheeks, which seemed to say, they should not have been brought all that distance to have their cases examined. So, too, the medical man said who came in. Wilson's proud spirit sickened and rebelled against the sight before him; and *he would not sit down, but stood by the door as he entered*, as if he would not make himself

one of the unhappy set within. Little Edward held his father's hand; his poor tattered frock and sickly face drew the attention of one or two of those who were there, who spake to him. The child, too young to feel his father's weight of grief, immediately began to talk, and amuse himself with calling at the people who were standing about, when his voice became louder than the workhouse master, who was there, thought good. He ordered the child to be quiet; but a second offence of a similar kind brought on the poor boy a severe blow on the face.

"Even workhouse children seem to think 'they have matters their own way,'" said the master, as he struck the child's face.

In a moment the crimson colour rushed over Edward's face, and a tear started to his eye. His father saw it, and was already writhing with indignation at different things he had seen. He was little prepared to see his little boy so treated. He started from the place where he stood, and struck the man to the ground with one blow of his fist. He had been a very powerful man, and having now no self-control for the fear of God or of man, the blow he gave was a very severe one.—The man lay senseless.

In a moment the whole place was in a state of confusion, and Wilson was seized *on and taken* forcibly away. A mob had

gathered round him which shut out his child from reaching him.

"Father! father!" cried the child, "do let me go to father." But his tears were only met with fresh blows, and, broken-hearted, the little boy sat down to cry on a bench in the corner. It was enough to make Wilson burst through all those who held him, when he saw his little boy left alone;—but he might not stay.

It was soon noised in the village that Wilson had committed a great offence. Some said he had committed murder. His poor wife, troubled by the report, rushed out in the direction of the workhouse, and met the men who were bringing along her husband. Wilson looked at her with a look of inexpressible bitterness, but he might not speak.

It was a few days after this that I was in the neighbouring village on business; it was the village where the magistrates sat. Passing along the street, I saw three figures across the way, one of which I immediately recognised to be Wilson, in custody of two policemen; they were waiting for the sitting of the magistrates, before whom his case was to be examined. Wilson's head was hung down, and his eyes so fixed on the ground that he did not notice me. I hesitated whether to cross the road and speak to him, knowing his *proud temper*, and especially his feelings with

regard to myself: I feared it might hurt him, and at that moment could do but little good. While I was doubting how to act, a scene took place which will never pass from my mind. I had watched him for some moments, with his hands clasped, and not a syllable escaping his lips. The two policemen, with the usual indifference of men who are used to a scene of sin and misery which they are called on to witness, were talking to each other in an idle careless manner.

At this moment the sound of a cart wheel was heard coming up the hill in the distance, and I almost instantly lifted up my eyes and saw a cart approaching the village hill, the figures of children standing in the front. It was coming so slowly and heavily along, that it was some time before I was able to see who they were that were in it; indeed my own attention was too much taken up with the unhappy man, whose crime had brought him into misery, to think of any thing else at the moment. As the cart came near, I saw the figure of a child standing in the front; it was a little boy of about five years old. He was dressed in a faded nankeen coat, which seemed worn out with washing; a ragged straw hat was on his head, from which a broken feather hung down over his ear, dirty with wearing and neglect. A small blue shawl, equally faded with his

coat, covered, or tried to cover, his cold neck : his little red shivering arms were huddled up under the shawl ; he was trying to get warm. There was something seemingly in his hand which he was treasuring up with care ; the child's face was pale and dirty ; and his manner was strange and excited. He stood in the front of the cart, and seemed anxiously watching the movements of the horses and the driver ; this seemed for the moment to make him forget his trouble. As it approached nearer, I saw the figure of a woman in the back part of the cart ; her face was buried in her hands ; a baby lay in her lap ; by her side were two or three children, crying and talking by turns. There was something so strange and unusual about the appearance of the boy in front, that my attention was drawn towards the group : as they came near, I perceived they were Wilson's family going to the workhouse.

My only hope now was, that they would pass without Wilson seeing them. His eyes were fixed on the ground ; I thought they would pass by him unnoticed. My hope was vain ; the cart drew up at a beer-shop just opposite where the prisoner stood ; the men jumped down, and the child, as a child will, raised the whip the driver had just dropped ; a severe blow and an oath followed. "Can't you let things alone, little pauper ?" said

the man, in the usually brutal way in which officials of an union do often address the poor. The child cried out with the pain, and shrugged his little shivering arms into his face. Wilson heard him cry, and he looked up. I saw the colour rush into his face and as soon leave it. He made a sudden start; little Edward saw his father, and in a moment all his pain was forgotten. The children ran to the side of the cart near which he was standing. "Mother! mother! there's father. Father!" cried all the little voices: "Father shall ride by me; father shall have my place; father will go with us to the house now;—father shall drive the horse, and not the cruel man."

Mrs. Wilson had hid her face deeper still in her threadbare shawl, and sobbed aloud.

"Pray allow this poor woman to get out and speak to her husband," said I, addressing the driver: "he is likely not to see her again for many months."

"And what's that to me?" said the man; "she's a pauper, and paupers haven't feelings: I can't wait for her." So spoke the man; perhaps not unnaturally for one who was used to see the holy tie of matrimony broken, and those "put asunder whom God has joined;" and who were accustomed to see the "blessed poor" treated as *animals* to be kept alive. I appealed to

the policemen. They were more kind to the prisoner than the parish official to the pauper; they let Wilson come near the cart. He did so, but he could not look up: he leant his head upon the rail: I saw the blood throb piteously to his forehead. "Oh, Wil-
"son," said his wife, "see what you have
"brought us to. I could not pay the rent,
"and the landlord came and sold the things;
"and what *could* I do? we were all starving,
"so I got a ticket for the house."

"Then you are going to the union?" said Wilson, with a tone full of bitterness.

"What *could* I do else?" said she, "we
"have no other home."

"And all the things sold?" said her hus-
band.

"All sold—yes, every thing; they would
"hardly let my poor children keep the rags
"on them."

"The Bible, too," said he, "my Annie's
Bible, which I so "loved—that sold?"

"No, no, father, here's the Bible," cried little Edward, dragging out from under his ragged shawl the book, which hitherto he had hugged up in his cold, red, shivering hands; "here's the Bible, father, dear. Edward
"bought it for a silver fourpence, which the
"lady gave him," and the child screamed again
for joy. His mother, as far as her sobbing
would allow her, told Wilson, that when the

men were carrying off the furniture, the child saw them seize on the Bible too, and, with more than a child's thoughtfulness, he said, "Oh, that's father's Bible, don't take 'father's Bible;" and going to a little box, in which he kept his sundry treasures, he brought out a silver four-pence a lady had given him, and offered it to the man for the Bible. It touched even his heart, and Edward kept the Bible. The poor boy thrust it towards his father. "Do take it, father; "Edward bought it for father." I can see the Bible now; it was a little blue, calf Bible, with diamond-shaped stamps on the side, and the edges of the leaves were all ragged and torn. One tear started from Wilson's eye, and rolled over his sickly, sunken cheek; he took the book; his voice struggled to speak. "Then I shall have no "home to go to now, if I *do* come back; "and *you*, where are you to go, my poor, "poor children, to *that* workhouse, after all? "and you, too, Mary!" He could say no more; his head again sunk on the edge of the cart, and he sobbed aloud. The carters came up, and jumping into the cart, were beginning to urge on the horse. It was quite in vain to beg them to wait a little longer—not five minutes more, for a few more parting words. "They were paupers, so what mattered their feelings?" The poor

children cried bitterly as the cart drove away ; and long after it had gone on, we heard their voices above the sound of the wheels, crying, " Father ! father ! You come " too ! " But he had a different work to do, to suffer God's just Chastisement for sin and delayed Repentance. Poor Wilson ! It was a bitter moment for him ; he stood watching the cart till it was quite out of sight, and the form of little Edward, standing at the back, with his broken feather dangling from his hat, could be seen no more ; he watched them to the last, and then turned away ; his heart seemed indeed nearly broken. The police-men had acted with great forbearance and feeling, which gave me an opportunity of going up to the unhappy man. He started when I approached him ; he was still gazing in the direction where the cart had gone. " Wilson," I said, " this is a sore trial to you, " but you have indeed brought it on your- " self ; yet we are allowed to look at it as " God giving the barren tree one year more, " and he is pruning it severely to make it " bring forth fruit."

" Yes, sir, yes," he said, " I know it all, I " have deserved it all ; and now all is over, " all is lost, *for ever.*" He said these last words with a bitterness which made me shudder.

" No, no, Wilson, not for ever ; unless you " are determined it shall be Is not God

"long-suffering and gracious, slow to anger, "and of great mercy ? Of course, you are "now under his anger, but he waits for you "to repent ; you would never have had this "opportunity given you at all, were it not "that he is still willing to bring you to Re- "pentance. Pray take this view of your case; "a little while, and it *may* be too late, and "your heart hard past recovery. Oh, take this "moment before it is flown ; humble your- "self under God's afflicting hand ; your "repentance must be severe and painful ; it "must indeed be a work of life ; yet begin "without another hour's delay ; remember, "despair is sin." The poor man seemed to listen attentively as I spoke ; his eyes were fixed on the ground. As I ended, the policeman announced that the prisoner must go in for examination. "You have that "Bible," said I, on parting, "may *that* be "blessed to your soul." He did not speak as they led him away.

Months passed away, and I heard no more of the Wilsons. The Union in which Mrs. Wilson and the children were was not in my own parish, so I could not see them. Their cottage was soon occupied by another family. I often passed it, and never could help standing, for a moment or more, to think of the unhappy family who had gone ; that last scene was not to be forgotten.

I was only able to learn that Wilson was

committed to prison and hard labour for some time.

It was a year or more after the events I have described above, when I had one evening strolled out rather beyond my parish, to enjoy the beauty and stillness of the scene ; it was an evening in early spring, and the sun had just sunk behind the ridge of a neighbouring hill. It was one of those evenings when the air seems softened by the approach of summer, and the trees are red with the almost bursting bud ; the soft yellow twilight glowed in the distance, melting over my head into a deep blue, while one silver star was just beaming out, and the cold thin crescent of the new moon stood out with the lustre of a diamond in the dark vault of the sky. A few birds were singing their last song before they went to rest in the boughs of the leafless trees, and the early gnats were dancing their fantastic reel over the tall topmost sprouts of the thorn. The smoke of a few cottages, which curled up over the fields before me, told me of a tired father, with his little children gathered round his knee. The only other sounds were the voices of a few stragglers who still lingered out to play in the early spring light before their cottage doors.

I sat down on a stile to enjoy the calm scene, so full of peace and full of lessons to the Christian, speaking of the quiet calm-

ness which succeeds to the mind when Affections are subdued to Christ—the character disciplined by Trials and sorrows having had their perfect work—having been contentedly borne and *looked* upon as filling up the sufferings of Christ to the members of his Body—the Church. The evening spoke of rest after a day's toil, and spoke in its own deep undertone of the Rest which remains for the people of God when Christ's Church, no longer militant, will rest with him in glory. The calm glow of twilight seemed like the outward Form of the very Being of Rest and Tranquillity.

A figure of a man approached me, its dark outline contrasting strikingly with the light behind him. He was walking slowly, and carried something on his back. As he approached me I perceived he felt inclined to avoid me; while hesitating whether to proceed or not, I saw him more clearly, and saw it was Wilson.

I immediately went up to him, but he hung down his head and seemed unwilling to approach me. I soon learnt he had just left his prison, and had turned immediately in the direction of his old home. He inquired anxiously about his family, of whom I could tell him but little. I was greatly shocked to see how much thinner and paler *he looked*, and how worn out he seemed:

his clothes were threadbare. A little bundle he carried on his shoulder seemed to contain his all.

"Ah, sir," said he, "I've gone through
"much since I saw you, and indeed I have
"had cause to thank God I have been so
"afflicted; I trust I have left that prison a
"different man to what I went in, thank God
"for it; I had a hard trial at first, very
"hard." He stopped, and he leaned on his
stick.

"It was hard," said I; "yours was a proud
"heart; it needed great pulling down to
"humble it; but a kind God has watched
"over you and done the severe work, while
"he has 'not suffered you to be tempted
"beyond what you are able to bear.'"

"He has not indeed, sir; I thought when
"I went into that prison my heart must have
"broken; for days and nights I could not
"pray—I could hardly think; I am sure if
"I could, I should have made away with my
"own life. Oh, sir, you don't know the
"temptations I've had at times to *that*."

"I do not doubt," I said, "but that Satan
"is allowed to have a peculiar power over
"minds which are given over to serve him,
"to tempt them to the most unnatural sins.
"I have known him so strongly tempt men to
"destroy themselves, as to leave them appa-
"rently without the power of resisting him.

" But we know God's Grace is sufficient for
" us, and it is only the bad whom he is
" allowed thus to tempt."

Our conversation lasted some time, and we had reached the gate of my house before it was finished. In the course of two or three weeks Wilson was again settled in the village, and his wife and children returned from the workhouse once more to live with him under one roof.

It was a happy evening, the first on which they arrived. He had taken a small cottage, which stood in a retired lane away from the main part of the village; he went himself to fetch back his family. I went to meet them on their return. It was a very beautiful scene—the red melancholy evening sun was setting over the high hedge-rows, which were bursting with their young leaves, and myriads of insects were dancing in the light calm air. I was watching their rapid motions when the sound of the children's voices made me look that way, when little Edward turned the corner, running and leaping with joy before his father, who was carrying his youngest child on his shoulder, and leading another by the hand. His wife was leaning on his other arm; poor thing! she had gone through much indeed, but it had not been in vain. The whole effect of the sunny sky in *the quiet lane, the hedge-bank, full with its*

early flowers, from the broad yellow primrose to the tall hyacinth, seeming determined to make up in colour for the absence of the leaves, the sound of the children's voices, and the happy faces of Wilson and his wife, formed a scene which was full of happiness to those who beheld it; yet, to a close observer, there was deep sorrow marked on Wilson's face, which could leave no mistake that he had gone through, and was going through, much. He had sinned deeply, and however much we repent of sin, though we are by God's mercy restored to our earthly comforts awhile, yet there should be ever amid all our thankfulness and joy a deep sad recollection of past sin.

And besides this, Wilson was very ill; the complaint which had so long hung upon him had made rapid progress in the prison, and his bitter thoughts and anxiety for his family had served to confirm it more and more. He was plainly fast going, and was settling himself in his new home but for a little while. I often saw him, and always found him subdued and chastened by affliction. It was having its "perfect work in him," and he was striving hard by God's grace to grow in every Grace of the Spirit. He had often prayed against pride and for humility; when at his little Annie's grave he had first felt the importance of serving God. He little knew how God would answer his prayer.

through such a humbling process. We often pray for Grace and states of mind, and are little prepared to take patiently God's way and time of granting an answer. How often more faith is given by the rending of earthly ties, and humility by blows to our pride and vanity we little like at the time ! So Wilson felt ; he had been indeed humbled, and now, while old friends in the village turned their backs on him, he would say, " Ah, well, God's " will be done ; I have only got what I " prayed to have—none but God to trust " to."

Yet I know the struggle was severe to his disposition. For a few Sundays he was able to get to church ; he was most regular, and especially at the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper—that blessed means of grace, by which we continue our baptismal state of membership with Christ. His care-worn face always seemed lightened of all its load as he turned away from the holy altar ; what was going on was the work of the Holy Spirit. It was a severe work of Repentance—much was to be undone. His will seemed perfect to serve God, and that makes our success sure.

I was often struck with his extreme anxiety for the spiritual welfare of his wife and children. His very kind way of speaking of men who had certainly acted very unkindly to him struck me also ; this was

unlike his natural character in days when he had made a high profession. He had neglected sadly any regular instruction of his family. He seemed to fancy he could rise above the use of Means, and his severe language against his enemies had often been most painful ; sorrow had done the work in him by God's grace, which nothing else could.

So weeks passed away, and full summer again came upon the world. Wilson had sunk rapidly ; by degrees he was unable to reach church, and was confined to the immediate neighbourhood of his cottage.

I used often to see his tall wasted figure, with his little boy in his hand, strolling under the hedge. But soon that was too much also.

It was long before the approach of death seemed to have done the work of completely levelling Wilson's strong constitution. The weather was unusually lovely, and the leaves had burst forth more than commonly early, but the greater warmth brought no more life to Wilson. His earthly day had passed away, and the summer's sun only spoke of death to him in this world, though, God grant, it spoke of a brighter hope hereafter. I was sent for suddenly to see him one evening :— he was fast dying ; he was sitting in his large arm-chair, with his face towards the door, which, opening on the lane, helped the poor sufferer to enjoy all he could of the

life of the scene about him. The sun was sinking behind the cottage, and the shadow of it fell on the opposite hedge, while every tree and flower was blazing with its crimson light. His eye was sunk deep in its socket; his cheek was of an ashy pale; his breath deep and laboured; that shadow was come over his face which always goes before death; the dry parched lip, and dewy forehead, all spoke of dying: his thin hand was laid on his wife's, and little Edward sat at his feet, watching his father. All were silent as I entered.

"It is all nearly over," said he, turning, and offering his hand.

"He was taken for death at two this afternoon," said his wife.

He looked frightened, and his face expressed great anxiety. "I am afraid to die after all, though I thought I should not be. Can't you tell me something more?"

There was something bitterly anxious about these last words—"tell me something more." He had been fancying he felt ready for death, but when it came, it seemed so terrible, and his past life so bad, he could not realize the hope he thought he should feel. His breathing was so difficult that he could scarcely speak; he only turned his face from side to side, looking anxiously at me, to find, as he hoped, more comfort.

of course, pointed him to the full, perfect Pardon offered by our blessed Saviour for sinners ; and told him, if he were truly penitent, that Pardon would be freely given to him.

“ Yes, sir, but am I truly penitent ? how “ am I to know ? ”

“ You must look at your life during the “ past few months ; see if, by God’s help, “ you have resisted sin, and increased in ho- “ liness. Our fruits are the test of our “ religious sincerity ; and if you have reason “ to feel you have so repented, trust wholly “ in that Saviour who has offered himself “ for the chief of sinners.” I was anxious to turn his thoughts inward for the work of self-examination. He seemed more comforted.

“ But,” said he, “ I thought Joy was a “ fruit of the Spirit ; then why have not I “ got it ? Is it not a sign I have not the “ Spirit ? ”

“ Joy,” I answered, “ in the passage you “ refer to, refers more to joy at other per- “ sons’ repentance, as angels rejoice. It is “ directly joined with love ; therefore we “ may not take it here in the sense of “ triumphant hope, because one often sees “ persons who, without doubt, have the fruit “ of the Spirit, and yet are very despond- “ ing about themselves.”

"Yes, but," he said, "I thought at death
"Christ's people had great Peace?"

"Peace of that kind is the gift of God,
"and not given to all: we generally shall
"find it where the mind has been long de-
"voted to God. When Repentance has been
"so late as your's, we can scarcely expect
"it; yet, though you have it not, there is
"no reason to think you are not safe for the
"other world—none. The Love and Power
"of your blessed Redeemer are still your
"trust, a most sure and certain trust, while
"in penitence you rely on him."

He seemed still anxious and unable to realize the comfort he hoped to have done. I pressed his receiving the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as a means of bringing Christ nearer to his soul, and him to his Saviour. How beautifully is that blessed sacrament appointed to help us to realize Christ, and to feel more fully his Presence and his Love! He heard the proposal with delight, and received it with calm and earnest attention, keeping up the same through all that service, and the Visitation of the Sick, which preceded it. He was much exhausted by the effort, and sunk back in his chair; but he seemed much more at peace. He had drawn as near to Christ as we are permitted in this world by outward Means, and Christ was his only hope.

The last agony was fast coming on ; his poor wife rested her head on his chair, striving to conceal the intense grief she felt. More than once he turned towards me with a look of anxiety, as if he wished to say something he could not utter. At last he did with effort :—“ Oh ! Sir, take care of “ my poor wife, and my poor, poor children.”

“ Don’t fret, father, dear,” said little Edward ; “ Edward will work for mother ; ” and the little fellow burst into a flood of tears and hid his face in his hands.

The sun had gone, and the broad moon shed a pale violet light in at the window, and on the face of the dying man. We had scarcely moved from the place where we had been since I entered. We watched with the stillness which you only find in a room of death : he often opened his eyes and looked round, as if for something he missed, but we could not discover what it was. The pauses between his breath grew longer and longer, and his breath less deep. The utter stillness of the night, and the pale light of the moon on his face, seemed well in season with so solemn a scene. There came a little choke—we listened for another breath, but there was none : yet we watched more than a minute,—we watched in vain ; the face, over which his poor wife was leaning, was that of a dead man. There was a slight settling of

the features for another moment; it was a moment of agony to her—the first moment of a desolate widowhood.

How mercifully had God spared this poor sinner, till, by severe Chastisement, he had humbled his proud heart; and never left him alone till he was perfectly submissive to his will; and yet had not taken him till he was fit to go from this world to his home above. Those who are striving to serve God, we are sure he will leave till he sees they are fit to be removed.

The day on which was the funeral was very sad. The widow and the little boy followed poor Wilson to the grave;—it was Annie's grave, opened again for him. He had begged he might be laid by her in death; on her little coffin was laid his long one, in the full hope and trust of a joyful Resurrection for both. The same turf covered the father and his little girl. How different the process which prepared each for Glory! how different a tale did Wilson's worn-out face tell, to the calm stillness of his infant's corpse;—yet their Hope was one.

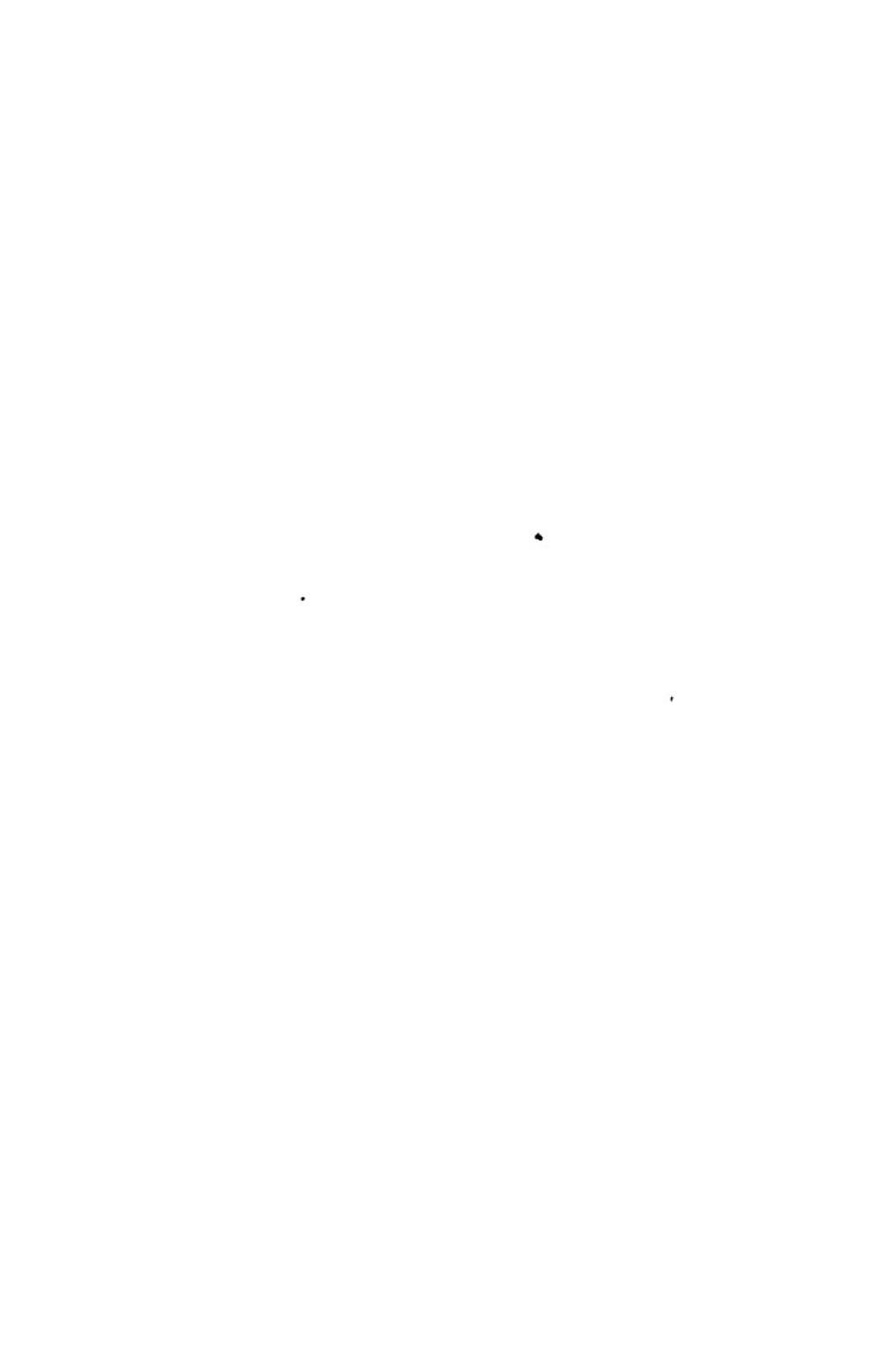
We left them, side by side, in Annie's grave.



True Stories of Cottagers.

MARY COOPER.

R. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD STREET HILL.





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TRUE
Stories of Cottagers.

MARY COOPER.



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Mary Cooper.

MY tale is a simple one; but it has the merit of truth, and that will perhaps make up for many faults. It is taken from scenes of real life, in which I have myself been deeply interested and engaged. The only liberty I have taken is to alter the names.

When first I knew Mary Wilson, the subject of my narrative, she was sixteen years old; and I seldom remember having seen a more interesting and pleasing-looking

girl. She had lost her mother some years, and at that time was living with her father and a younger brother, the former of whom worked for a farmer in the neighbourhood. With respect to her moral character I am not able to make so favourable a report as I have with regard to her personal appearance. Light, giddy, thoughtless, and gay, she seldom received with any apparent interest the visits of one who came on so solemn an errand as mine. Religious subjects required too serious a consideration for her mind: the empty vanities and follies of life engaged her fancy and engrossed her affections.

I shall now proceed to give a connected account of her life, from the time I first knew her, as far as I have been able to gather it from those who were related to her. May God grant to those who may peruse this tale, a practical and useful warning from her history !

In a cottage—it might be half a mile from Mary's door—there lived a young man and his aged mother, who, being a widow, depended wholly on her son for support.

Edward Cooper was at that time in his eighteenth year, and as well-looking a lad as I ever saw. He had been neglected from a child, as far as his real interests were concerned. A fond and foolish mother had

indulged him in every fancy, set him a bad example, and never reproved him for a fault. The result was that which might have been expected. At nine years old, sent out to join in work with those who were much his elders in vice as well as years,—accustomed to scenes of intemperance, blasphemy, and hypocrisy,—he soon sunk into all the crimes he saw in others, and followed to every length the examples against which he had no better principles to oppose.

But I would give him his due: though sunk into the worst habits, Edward was teachable and pliable. Had he not been, perhaps he would never so soon have fallen under the influence of bad companions; and, more than this, I believe him to have been an attentive and affectionate son. Had his youthful mind been guided by some milder influence, there was that in his nature which would have afforded the brightest hopes. I have seen him, even at these periods, shed tears abundantly when spoken to of an eternal world, or the death of Christ.

But the case was different. His early life, to a great degree, wore off those gentler points in his nature; and ere he was fifteen years old, Edward Cooper was a confirmed profligate.

Sin, however, often meets with punishment eyen on this side eternity; and while

waiting in fearful uncertainty for the results of a dying hour, the wretched sinner, even here, suffers the bitter punishment of his transgression. At this early age, the poor boy fell into an alarming illness, produced wholly by the unsteady habits which he had formed. With great difficulty his complaints were arrested by medical aid; and though to a great degree cured, he was pronounced to have begun a life, in all probability to be a short one, with a constitution ruined by his own follies.

I pass over the interval until the period of the commencement of my tale, during which Edward Cooper and his mother rented a small cottage in my parish, and lived on the scanty income which the former was able to earn with difficulty, from the constant return of his disorder. At this time he had attained, as I said above, his eighteenth year; and few young men of his neighbourhood possessed a fairer countenance, or a goodlier figure, than Widow Cooper's son. I can see his bright good-natured eye sparkling with the gladness of youth, and the profusion of dark brown hair that fell about his head. But there was always a paleness about his cheek, and occasionally a haggard expression of his features, which marked but too truly the **shock** which his health had sustained.

It was at this period that he became acquainted with Mary Wilson. Her light vivacious cheerfulness attracted his notice, and won his affections. He had often seen her slender form run out across the lane which bordered the view from his cottage-door, and had heard her merry laugh, as it rose high above the shouts of the village. Mary was certainly the fairest maiden in the country round, and had become too well acquainted with the fact that she was considered such by most of those who knew her. To win her affections, therefore, would be a triumph to the youth who should succeed in his suit.

It was a cold snowy evening in December, and Edward had taken shelter in Wilson's cottage. "Mary," said he, as he was sitting by her fireside, "I do not know why we shouldn't make one hearth of it; and you come and live along with mother and me. I'd make you a good husband; and my cottage is a tidy one."

Mary sat thoughtfully for some moments before she replied. "Why, Edward, we are but young, and I am sure my father would not hear of it; and, you know, I would not do what he would dislike, for he has been a good father to me."

But Cooper had set his mind upon it, and did not, perhaps, very clearly feel the

force of Mary's argument with respect to filial duty in such matters; and therefore with some ardour pressed his suit. At length the entrance of Wilson stopped the conversation, and the boy returned home.

Mary was right: her father did disapprove highly of the plan; for although, I fear, by no means guided by the highest principles, and actuated but little by the fear or love of God, he yet had his children's interest deeply at heart, and saw plainly enough the probable ill effects of so young a marriage between a thoughtless girl and a youth so well known for his unsteady conduct.

Now, had Mary carried into effect the good principle she began with, all had been well; but persons who will not have their lives guided by God's Holy Spirit may have some right feelings, but seldom the Will or Power to put them into Practice, when their Inclinations are to be opposed. Suffice it, then, to say, that the girl gave too ready an ear to Cooper's entreaty. Her father's warning disregarded, and his commands disobeyed, she chose her own path; and after many secret meetings, in an evil hour consented to become Cooper's wife.

It would be well if young persons among our poor would consider the countless sorrows they bring upon themselves in after-

life by a foolish and thoughtless marriage. Half their miseries may be traced to this cause ; and many a starving family and broken heart are the consequences to girls, who, in their youth and merriment, consented to become the wives of those who in reality were drunkards or profligates.

Wilson heard of his daughter's intention, and shut his door against her ; forgetting that this was the least probable means of reclaiming her from the path of imprudence. She immediately took refuge in Edward's house, from which, in two or three weeks, they were married.

I have as yet said but little of Cooper's mother. She was, as I stated, a widow, and had seen better days. Her children had all grown up, and married well, with the exception of Edward, who had always been her favourite. With him she had struggled through the storms and reverses of life. Hitherto that life had been a bad one—herself guilty of some sins of the worst description ; and having given way to every species of folly and vanity her scanty means would allow of, it was improbable that her children would choose a better path.

She was generally avoided by her neighbours, most of whom she had made her enemies by a proud and overbearing temper. She really loved her boy, but perhaps this

was the best feature in her conduct. She was a vain and jealous woman, seldom seen at church, and always aiming at a station higher than the one in which God had placed her.

It had been chiefly at her instigation that Edward had pressed his suit with Mary, and under her direction that they were afterwards married.

For a few weeks, life seemed to shine brightly enough on Mary Cooper. It was now the spring of the year; and the return of the sweet Sun of Summer was causing the hedge-rows to burst out into their tender verdure, and the birds to sing their blithest carols. Most of the village women were employed in work out of doors, and Edward's wife had joined herself to the number of the female labourers.

I can well remember one hot summer's afternoon, walking in a lane and hearing the voice of Mary Cooper loudly and merrily sounding above those of a party of hay-makers with whom she was walking. It seemed sad that one who had so deeply offended an only surviving parent should be thus gay of heart; and on hearing a light and profane expression cross her lips, I arose, and placed myself in their way.

My appearance startled them. "Mary," I said, "when will you learn to reverence

"that sacred name you used but now so
"lightly?"

She looked confused, and was silent.
"You little know," I continued, "how
soon you may be called on to stand
before His Bar; and you seem ill pre-
pared for it now."

"I am as well prepared as most others
"of my age, sir."

"And can you look around, and say you
think most others *are* prepared to die?" I
said, casting a glance around upon the
thoughtless group that encircled her.

She made no reply, and I passed on. A
merry laugh which struck upon my ear told
me how slight had been the effect my re-
mark had made.

Weeks wore away, and but little change
took place in Cooper's family. I visited
him more than once, but seldom found my
visits acceptable. At length matters began
to assume a different aspect, and Mary had
reason to alter her views of life.

Mrs. Cooper's jealous disposition began
to shew itself. At first there had been little
to excite it. Her daughter-in-law had been
admired by the neighbours, and this had
served to foster and flatter her pride. But
she now began to find that Edward's affec-
tions and attentions were transferred from
her to his young wife. Accustomed to his

undivided attention from his infancy, she could ill bear this; and the consequence was, she conceived the strongest dislike for Mary; and being governed by no principle save her own vanity and self-interest, she gave way to her envious feelings.

Her first object was to undermine the confidence that she perceived her son to have placed in his wife, and to weaken his regard for her by constantly dwelling on her faults, and thus hoping to regain the influence she found she was losing over his mind. Now, unhappily, this was no very difficult task; for although Edward really loved his wife, his disposition being pliable, the power which his mother held over him was very great.

"Mary doesn't look after you, Ned, as I used," said Widow Cooper to her son one evening, as they were waiting her return from work.

"Oh, mother, she is young and thoughtless, and doesn't know much of such things."

"It isn't for me to say a word betwixt man and wife; but between you and me, Ned, I think there's more than mere thoughtlessness in all that."

"Why, mother, sure you don't think Mary's false to me?"

The crafty woman saw the effect her re-

mark had produced, and followed it up by a long enumeration of her daughter-in-law's faults and frailties, each of which sunk deeply into her son's mind. He sat musing, and thoughtful.

"And see," said she, finishing a long speech of censure she had just been passing on the object of her jealousy, "here comes Mary walking and laughing with Joe Bedford, as if we hadn't been waiting for her this hour."

This remark completed her triumph; for she had succeeded, not only in making Edward dissatisfied with his wife, but by this last speech she awakened, in the too credulous mind of her son, a suspicion as to Mary's constancy to him. The consequence was, when Mary entered the cottage, she was received with silence by both.

Days passed on, and Widow Cooper's manner was quite altered. She seldom spoke to Mary, except with crossness and severity, and frequently exposed her little acts of carelessness and omission to her husband in her presence. All this Mary could have borne; but Edward too was changed. He seldom spoke to her; and when he did, his tone was sharp and abrupt. This was very different to what it had been at first: none could be more kind than he had been to her. She was not devoid of

Discernment, and soon discovered the real cause of all this alteration. She longed for an opportunity to speak to her husband alone.

At last, one day, when she was sitting alone in the cottage, Edward came in from his morning's work. His mother was out, the table stood empty, and Mary sat gazing on the fire.

"Why is there no breakfast, girl?" said Cooper, in an angry voice; "this won't do, "I must tell you."

"Ned, you didn't used to speak so to "me," said Mary, looking timidly up from the fire.

"And what if I didn't—what matters? I "say, girl, where's the breakfast? You shall "get it, or I'll show you the odds."

"Oh, Ned, Ned, don't speak so," said the poor girl, bursting into tears; "do listen to "me; hear what I say. You did love me, "and why don't you now? I left father, and "all for you; and if you turn on me, I have "none to go to."

Edward was not hard-hearted, and he did listen to her, and did speak more kindly.

"Well, Mary, and what would you say?"

"Why, I wish you would come and live "alone along with me, and leave mother, for "she doesn't like me; I see it. And we'd be "so happy; I would be so good to you then,

"Ned. I'd never see you want what I could get. I know we shall never be happy here; for mother will make you hate me. Do, Ned; dear Ned, please do."

What Cooper would have answered we do not know; for the door opened, and his mother entered. After a sharp rebuke for the absence of breakfast, and a look of suspicion on Mary's red eyes, Widow Cooper sat down to her morning meal. Her son did not speak, nor raise his eyes; but soon rising up, left the cottage. Mary too went to work, but her heart was very sad.

Evening came on; it was long past Edward's usual hour for returning, but he had not come. Mary got up, and opened the door. She listened; there was no sound of his approach. She thought she heard his whistle; but no—it was the wind among the boughs. She sat down again; backwards and forwards she retraced her steps from the fire-place to the door. She even walked along the garden, and down the lane; but he did not come.

"What if he never comes back to me!" said she, sobbing to herself. "Think if what I said this morning has driven him quite away!"

The voice of her mother-in-law recalled her to the cottage. "Come, girl, don't stand

"there star-gazing all night; Ned can't be
"always tied to you."

Mary returned slowly and sorrowfully to the cottage. The widow retired to her bed; but not Mary. She sat by the burning embers hour after hour. It was some time past midnight when Edward's voice was heard at the door. She rushed to open it.

"Thank God, you've come, Ned!" said Mary. But her heart sunk within her when he reeled and fell to the ground. He was deeply intoxicated; it was the first time since they were married that he had acted thus.

Time passed on, and matters grew no better for Mary Cooper. Her strength was fast failing her. Her cheek had lost its colour, and her eye had grown sunk and sorrowful. Those who saw her pass, said, "Mary was not the girl she used to be." Her merry voice was never heard, and strange stories were spread abroad. When she went to her work, her step was hurried, and she seldom spoke. She was dying of a broken heart.

Had Mary known where to look for peace and comfort, her trials would have worn a different appearance to her, and, perhaps, have been less in themselves. But she knew nothing of any source of comfort beyond

her own spirits. She knew of no Holy Comforter Who could fix her soul on a better portion, or point her to a brighter scene than this lower world. If she had herself known the Love of God, and the nature of true Religion, she might have had an influence over her husband, of a different nature to what she had ever possessed. Above all, she knew nothing of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners. If she ever thought at all upon her condition, she might have seen how great had been her deficiencies, how dark and many her sins : but she knew not where to find a Pardon, or to seek Comfort.

She could not relieve her heart by prayer ; for she knew nothing of that God to Whom she should have prayed, except from the vague and indistinct idea which she gathered from the slight instructions of her childhood, or her occasional attendance at church. She did, indeed, try to pray more than once , but she had been unused to it, and felt perplexed and bewildered.

It was a sad time for poor Mary.

From the night I described above, but little intercourse passed between her and Edward ; he often stayed out at night, sometimes till past midnight, and sometimes till morning dawn ; when he was at home he was

gloomy and cross, and spoke frequently to his mother, but seldom to Mary; and yet she did her best. She attended to all his little wants, and bore with all his tempers. If he was late in coming home, Mary was always sitting by the dying embers, or watching at the half-closed door. If his work prevented his return to breakfast, Mary always carried it to him. She *did* love him, and all his unkindness could not quench her affection; her heart might break, but not her love cease.

It was a still October evening, and the red beams of the setting sun were tinging the yellow leaves, and shining brightly on many a cottage-window, when Mary drew her chair to the open door; she was alone, which was nothing strange to her now. Her wasting health had prevented her pursuing her accustomed labour that morning; and filled with sad thoughts, she was watching the fading light of the autumn evening. More than one big tear had fallen from her eye, as she retraced the past in her mind. A shadow crossed the doorway—it was Edward.

“What makes you cry, Mary?” said he, after he had laid down the tools he held in his hand; “you are always gloomy now.”

Unaccustomed to so kind a tone of voice from her husband, she looked up hastily, “Cry? oh, I don’t know, Ned.”

There was a short pause. Both were occupied with their different reflections for a moment. Mary started up, and hid her face on Cooper's shoulder. "Oh, you've broken "my heart, Edward; you've broken my "heart—and that's all."

"I *have* been unkind to you, I know it," said he; "I thought of it as I was at work "to-day: I don't know what made me think "so of it to-day more than usual; but, Mary, "I'll try and be a better lad to you, if you'll "forgive and forget."

"I can do that quick enough," said she; "any thing to make you think of me. I left "father, friends, and all for you; and I feel "now so desolate when I've none to speak "with. I was down at father's yesterday; "and he asked me why I looked so down "now-a-days: but I couldn't tell him it was "you, Ned; and so I told a lie for your "sake."

"And what took you to father's yester-
"day?"

Mary would fain have concealed the reason, but she felt compelled to speak. "I "was walking to the town to the shop, and "I was faint for food; so I went in for a bit "of bread."

It seemed to flash for the first time on Edward's mind, that his wife had for a long

time stinted herself of food, because she could not work, and Widow Cooper threw out so many hints about the burden of a sick wife. He then remembered how often she had refused meat when there was some, and had contented herself with a basin of sop pea-bread, when he ate better things.

He was not yet dead to right feelings, and he really felt bitter regret and self-reproach; he meant what he said when he now turned to Mary, and said, "Well, my girl, I'll be "better; I've not been good to you, that "I've not; but it's been mother, not me." He felt ashamed, and did not like to say more. He brushed away a tear with his coat-sleeve.

"Thank you, dear Ned; thank God for "that," said the poor girl, as she sunk back upon a chair, and her face fell on her hand. Edward's heart ached when he saw how thin she was, and how pale her cheek looked, and her eye so sunk. He did not know why he had never noticed it before. He did determine to do better, and he was sincere in his intention.

But it was too late.

Widow Cooper soon saw how matters stood, and perceived the alteration in her son's mind and feelings. She was not a foolish woman, and saw that strong measures

in such a case were more likely to do harm than good; and really, to do her justice, she was not so entirely devoid of feeling, as not to have some pangs of remorse at the evil she had done. With Edward the impression, vivid for the moment, soon lost its keen edge; especially, his mother's altered manner made him think that Mary had reason to be happier.

I remember it was about this time, that hearing of Cooper being in worse health than usual, I sent my servant to his cottage with a message requesting him to come down and see me, as my time in paying my daily visits to the cottages was limited. I can well recollect the second or third time that he came; having occasion to pass the door as he went out, I heard the voice of a girl address him.

Poor Mary had come with him, and was waiting in the lane for more than an hour and a half, until Edward came out, that he might not have to return alone to his cottage. I never knew she was there; but found, upon inquiry, that each time he had come, the affectionate girl had attended him, and watched in the rain and cold for his return.

At this period I knew but little of them; I had seen Edward several times, but had not conversed with him until now, and of

her I had seen very little. The incident I mentioned above was a few days after the conversation I last recorded. It was on Thursday evening, the 14th of November. I refer to specific times, for the point of my story draws to its close. It had rained hard all Friday night, and by day-dawn Cooper was at his work: he had been busily employed an hour or more, when a feeble voice called his name—it was Mary's voice; but so altered, so deep and hollow!

“Ned, I have brought your breakfast.”

“And why did you come, Mary; you are “not well enough to come out, girl, this raw “morning.”

“Oh, it won't hurt. Mother said last “night that I didn't work for you, Ned; and “I knew I would, and so I have; I shall be “bonny again, now you are kind.”

But her face and voice belied her speech. It would indeed be strange, if that wan face could ever look bonny again. So Cooper seemed half to think, as he watched her slender figure and trembling footstep pass along the lane. He could not rest quiet about her; and in the evening told his mother he would have the doctor see her, when he next paid him his visit. But the widow had been angry with Mary that day, and thought *nothing* but fancy ailed the girl.

Sunday passed away, and Edward was very ill himself; Mary waited on him, but with difficulty. On Monday morning Mr. Benson, the medical man, came to see Edward. He saw Mary; she had kept her bed, and appeared, in his opinion, to be suffering from exhaustion.

In the afternoon the old lady was out; and Mary begged her husband to carry her down stairs, for she could not walk. He brought her to the lower room, and placed a pillow on the table to rest her head.

"You seem very bad," said he, looking at her.

"Ah, I think you'll soon have the last of "my burden, Ned, except to the church-yard."

"No, Mary, don't talk so; you won't die."

"Well, I don't know; but I never feel as "I did. I haven't the spirit I once had; but "it isn't *your* fault—that's all."

Edward sighed; for he thought *it was his fault.*

"We haven't thought much of God," said Mary. "I remember the last sermon I heard "the Minister preach; he spoke much of "how soon we, the best of us, might die. I "felt what he said. But oh, Ned, Ned, I "don't know how to be religious; now I wish "I'd thought of it before."

Edward was silent; and she continued—
“ You know I was to have taught you to
“ read these winter evenings.”

Edward still looked at her in silence.

“ Well, and if I’m well, I can; but if
“ not, Ned, get Joe Bedford to do it—that’s
“ all.”

Cooper was bewildered by all this; her manner was so different, and her voice so wild.

At nine that evening his mother returned. Mary had been some time in bed. Her husband and his mother had been talking in a low tone in the room underneath.

Mary could not sleep. Widow Cooper passed through her room to her own inner chamber; she bade her daughter good night as she passed through.

Edward followed her.

“ Ned, you’ll come and speak to me, won’t you ?” said she, in a feeble voice.

“ No, no, boy,” cried his mother. “ Don’t “ mind her fancies.”

Edward wavered. Mary’s sunk eye was fixed on him. But he turned round and passed away from her.

There was a little window by Mary’s bed; the curtain had been torn away; the moon was now high, and a thousand grey fleecy clouds hurried past it; the wind blew from

the north cold and loud. Mary could not sleep ; her head rolled on her pillow, her eye counted over the little clouds that crossed the moon ; then it pained her to count—she left off. She slept for a few moments, and then woke with a start. She did not sleep again: hour after hour her heavy eye rested on the grey heavens, and her heart was very sorrowful. She thought of the past, of Edward's strange changes ; and yet she loved him *so much*. She thought of the happy feelings she had when she worked with the haymakers last summer. She wished to think of God, and *did* in her way ; and prayed more than once, for Edward heard her.

At last morning came ; Mary had dosed off when Widow Cooper passed through her room. It was nine when Edward entered.

“ Ned, is that you ? oh, I've had such a “night ; I'm glad you're come ; you won't “leave me again, will you ?”

He was silent. She told him how her night had been spent. Edward was putting on his coat, and scarcely answered her.

“ Are you bad now, Mary ?” he said, in a low tone. She did not speak. He turned round, and looked at her—his eye rested *on a corpse !*

He looked a moment more.

“ Oh, mother ! mother ! Mary's dead.”

The widow hastened up stairs. She did not expect this. Edward was leaning over the bed, and crying bitterly. "Mary's dead, "and I've killed her!" was the only thing he said.

It was too true. The struggle had been too much; and Mary had died of a broken heart.

Her death caused a great stir in the neighbourhood: many reports had gone abroad of Widow Cooper's ill-treatment of her; and it was thought best to have an inquest on the body. Thursday was fixed for the day.

At three in the afternoon, I repaired to the White Hart public-house, the place appointed for the inquest. It was a cold rainy day; the evening was setting in early. It was four before the coroner came, and by this time was nearly dark. He went to the cottage to examine the body, and on his return dismissed us for the same purpose. I had been sworn in as a juror. We repaired to Cooper's cottage, and met him with his mother on their way to the inquest. On our arrival at the stile, the rain was descending in a thick mizzle, and the wind blew loud and gusty. Crossing the stile, I entered the lower room of the cottage. A woman sat by the fire, which was smouldering in its

ashes ; a rushlight was flickering and flaring on the table.

"Are you come to see the body?" said the woman, in a pert voice, rising as she spoke.

On being answered in the affirmative, she directed us to a back house, from which a ladder arose, up which we were told to go. I ascended first, and found myself in a little chamber, the window of which was closed, and the rain beating violently against it. Before me was a stump bed, and a sheet over it : it covered a body ; a coffin was at the side. An instinctive fear made me pause, while the female roughly pulled the linen covering away, and disclosed the face of what was Mary Cooper. Her long black hair streamed negligently over the pillow, her eyes were half-closed, and her arms folded on her breast. She was just as the coroner had left her. We seldom see death in these positions ; the meanest and most friendless have these offices, at least, performed for them. But the necessity of the examination of the jury prevented such attentions from being paid here.

I shall never forget the sight—it was most affecting. We did not speak ; the woman held the candle near the face. It was indeed

Mary's features ; fair even in death. How sad were the feelings forced upon my mind ! On that very bed, and in that room, had Mary spent in solitude her last night on earth ; through that window had her tired eyes watched the cloudy moon, while her aching heart retraced the sad events of the last few months. How desolate must have been her feelings ! so forsaken, neglected, and unnoticed ; without one heart to feel with her, and without one friend to speak to ; and there, in that place had she lain but two nights before.

How altered was that face ! I had seen little of her since the day when I met her with the haymakers in the lane. Mary was then the gayest and merriest girl in all our village. No voice was half so blithe as hers, and no heart so gay. What a change ! to that cold brow—that silent breast !

We returned to the inquest. Edward Cooper was under examination. He gave his answers distinctly and well ; but he was pale and haggard. He had bitterly felt the events of the past few days, and was truly sorry for Mary's death.

The surgeon was next examined. There was little doubt of the verdict, which was at once brought in " Natural death."

There *were* those there who knew, or at least felt, there was something *unnatural* about it. For it is not common to die of a broken heart!

I saw Edward, and sat with him, the next day. He was deeply grieved, and appeared penitent. How long the feeling will abide, it is not for man to say.

The sad events of this summer have deeply affected him. He really loved Mary, but was too much influenced by the craftiness of his mother. His eyes are now open, but too late for Mary. He will never again hear her merry voice in the summer hay-field, or at his winter fireside. Her step will no longer be heard at his cold morning's work, or her form be by his side in his evening walk. All around him *must* make him sad; it must remind him of her sufferings, his cruelty, and above all, her gentle patient love. His cottage must be desolate for awhile, and the remembrance of the past summer most bitter; but it is the fruit of sin. All that is over—Mary Cooper has passed away. God grant, not so the lesson her death has left behind.

Edward has just left me. He is earnestly seeking to do better. On some future day I may, by God's will, place before my readers

the remainder of his story ; for his health seems fast failing, and I think his days are few.

On Sunday last he followed Mary to the grave.

The instruction of this tale is unlike that of most others of the kind,—it is one of warning, not of comfort. Should it fall into the hands of any young persons, let it teach them the sin of disobeying the wishes of a parent,—a sin so common, especially in matters connected with marriage. We often find this sin is visited in this world with its bitter penalty ; nor can it be expected that a young person will prosper in domestic life who has entered on it with this offence. Their punishment in this world may be more or less : it may not be so heavy as Mary Cooper's ; but it *will come*, even here. And in forming such connexions, allow me to express my conviction of the duty of deeply considering the religious character of one whom we select for our partner in life. How much misery is produced by marriages where this is not considered, has been too often brought to my mind in my experience of parish visiting,—the wretchedness of a neglected family, a cheerless home, and a broken heart.

Once more: we learn from this little history the blessings of early seeking God. It is hard to seek Him for the *first time* with an aching heart and a suffering body. Little do those who have been used to pray often, know the difficulty of prayer for the first time under such circumstances. I do not say it cannot be, but it is most difficult.

How consoling would it have been to Mary, to have been able to pour forth her sorrow before her Saviour, and betake herself to Him as an accustomed refuge ! If she had been used to cling to His Cross as the best shelter from the storms of life—to His Love as her best portion—and to have looked to His Blood as the only means of obtaining a pardon for sin, and making her acceptable with God the Father,—how different would her history have been !

Should this tale fall into the hands of one in the situation of Widow Cooper, let these learn how unkind, how cruel and wrong, is a partiality shewn to a child, at the expense of the comfort of one whom he has made a partner in life—a case too common.

But I must bid my reader farewell. I have told my tale; as I said at first, it has been a true one; its recollection is as fresh in my mind as the lapse of scarcely one week

can leave it. It will be long before I forget the impression it has made on me ; and I pray God that my story, which perhaps has assumed to my mind an interest at which my readers may be surprised, may be made a blessing at least to some.



